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CEDAR CREEK

A TALE OF CANADIAN LIFE.

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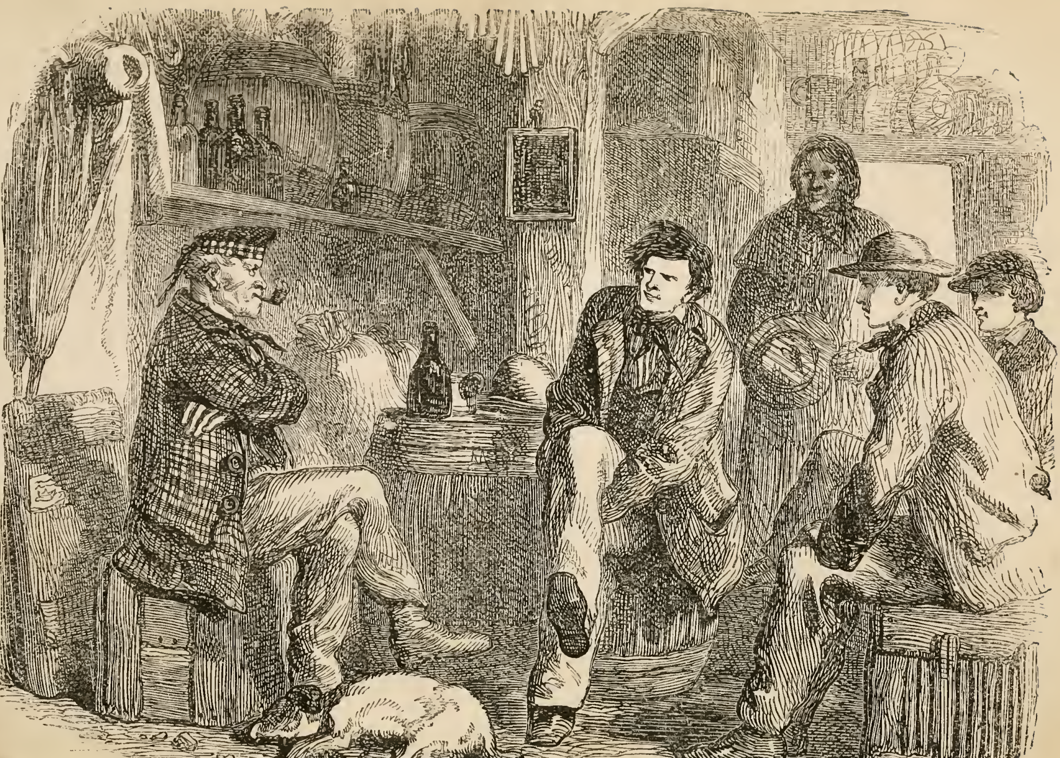
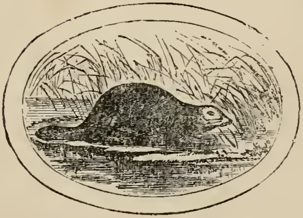


[Walshe, Elizabeth Hely]

CEDAR CREEK;

FROM THE SHANTY TO THE SETTLEMENT.

A Tale of Canadian Life.



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*** The story of Cedar Creek has been composed from the journals and letters of an emigrant family, and contains true pictures of life in the Far West. Intending emigrants should obtain the most recent information, from the latest official Colonization Circular (published by Groombridge and Sons), or by application at the Government Emigration Offices, the addresses of which are given in Almanacks and Directories.

CEDAR CREEK;

FROM THE SHANTY TO THE SETTLEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

WHY ROBERT WYNN EMIGRATED.

A NIGHT train drew up slowly alongside the platform at the Euston Square terminus. Immediately the long inanimate line of rail-carriages burst into busy life: a few minutes of apparently frantic confusion, and the individual items of the human freight were speeding towards all points of the compass, to be absorbed in the leviathan metropolis, as drops of a shower in a boundless sea.

One of the cabs pursuing each other along the lamplit streets, and finally diverging among the almost infinite ramifications of London thoroughfares, contains a young man, who sits gazing through the window at the rapidly passing ranges of houses and shops with curiously fixed vision. The face, as momentarily revealed by the beaming of a brilliant gaslight, is chiefly remarkable for clear dark eyes rather deeply set, and a firm closure of the lips. He scarcely alters his posture during the miles of driving through wildernesses of brick and stone: some thoughts are at work beneath that broad short brow, which keep him thus still. He has never been in London before. He has come now on an errand of hope and endeavour, for he wants to push himself into the army of the world's workers, somewhere. Prosaically, he wants to earn his bread, and, if possible, butter wherewith to flavour it. Like Britons in general, from Dick Whittington downwards, he thinks that the capital is the place in which to seek one's fortune, and to find it. He had not expected streets paved with gold, nor yet with the metaphorical plenty of penny loaves; but an indefinite disappointment weighs upon him as he passes through quarters fully as dingy and poverty-stricken as those in his own provincial town.

Still on—on—across "the province covered with houses;" sometimes in a great thoroughfare, where midnight is as noisy as noonday, and much more glaring; sometimes through a region of silence and sleep, where gentility keeps proper hours, going to bed betimes in its respectable streets. Robert Wynn began to wonder when the journey would end; for, much as he knew of London by hearsay and from books, it was widely different thus personally to experience the metropolitan amplitude. A slight dizziness of sight, from the perpetual sweeping past of lamps and shadowy buildings, caused him to close his eyes; and from speculations on the possible future and the novel present, his thoughts went straight home again.

Home to the Irish village where his ancestors had long been lords of the soil; and the peasantry had deemed that the greatest power on earth, under majesty itself, was his Honour Mr. Wynn of Dunore, where now, fallen from greatness, the family was considerably larger than the means. The heavily encumbered property had dropped away piece by piece, and the scant residue clung to its owner like shackles. With difficulty the narrow exchequer had raised cash enough to send Robert on this expedition to London, from which much was hoped. The young man had been tolerably well educated; he possessed a certain amount and quality of talent, extolled by partial friends as far above the average; but the mainstay of his anticipations was a promise of a

Civil service appointment, obtained from an influential quarter; and his unsophisticated country relatives believed he had only to present himself in order to realize it at once.

He was recalled to London by the sudden stoppage of the cab On the dim lamp over a doorway was stained the name of the obscure hotel to which he had been recommended as central in situation, while cheap in charges. Cabby's fare was exorbitant, the passenger thought; but, after a faint resistance, Mr. Wynn was glad to escape from the storm of h-less remonstrances by payment of the full demand, and so entered the coffee room.

It was dingy and shabby-genteel, like the exterior; a quarter of a century might have elapsed since the faded paper had been put up, or a stroke of painting executed, in that dispiriting apartment. Meanwhile, all the agencies of travel-stain had been defacing both. An odour of continual meal-times hung about it; likewise of smoke of every grade, from the perfumed havanna to the plebeian pigtail. The little tables were dark with hard work and antiquity; the chair-seats polished with innumerable frictions. A creeping old waiter, who seemed to have known better days in a higher class establishment, came to receive the new comer's orders; and Robert sat down to wait for his modest chop and glass of ale.

That morning's "Times" lay on his table: he glanced over the broad sheet of advertisements—that wondrous daily record of need and of endeavour among the toiling millions of London. The inexplicable solitude in a crowd came about the reader's heart: what a poor chance had a provincial stranger amid the jostling multitude all eager for the prizes of comfort and competence! Robert went back for anchor to one strong fact. The Honourable Mr. Currie Faver, Secretary to the Board of Patronage, had declared to the member for the Irish county of C——, on the eve of an important division, that his young friend should have the earliest appointment at his disposal in a certain department.

Robert Wynn felt an inward gratulation on the superiority of his auspices. True, the promise made in January yet remained due in July; but there were numberless excellent good reasons why Mr. Currie Faver had been as yet unable to redeem his pledge.

Robert turned his paper to look for the news: a paragraph in the corner arrested his attention.

"We learn from the best authority that, owing to the diminution of business consequent upon recent Acts of the legislature, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Public Locomotion to reduce their staff of officials, so that no fresh appointments can be made for some months."

He gazed at this piece of intelligence much longer than was necessary for the mere reading of it. The Board of Public Locomotion was the very department in which he had been promised a clerkship. Robert made up his mind that it could not be true; it was a mere newspaper report: at all events, Mr. Currie Faver was bound by a previous pledge; whoever remained unappointed, it could not be a friend of the hon. member for C——.

There were voices in the next compartment, and presently their conversation was forced on Mr. Wynn's attention by the strongly stated sentiment, "The finest country in the world—whips all creation, it does."

Some rejoinder ensued in a low tone.

"Cold!" with a rather scornful accent, "I should think so. Gloriously cold! None of your wet sloppy winters and foggy skies, but ice a yard and a half thick for months. What do you think of forty degrees below zero, stranger?"

Robert could fancy the other invisible person shrugging his shoulders.

"Don't like it, eh? That's just a prejudice here in the old country; natural enough to them that don't know the difference. When a man hears of seventy degrees below the freezing point, he's apt to get a shiver. But there, we don't mind it; the colder the merrier; winter's our time of fun: sleighing and skating parties, logging and quilting bees, and other sociabilities unknown to you in England. Ay, we're the finest people and the finest country on earth; and since I've been to see yours, I'm the steadier in that opinion."

"But emigrants in the backwoods have so few of the comforts of civilization," began the other person, with a weak, irresolute voice.

"Among which is foremost the tax-gatherer, I suppose?" was the triumphant rejoinder. "Well, stranger, that's an animal I never saw in full blow till I've been to the old country. I was obliged to clear out of our lodgings yesterday because they came down on the furniture for poor-rate. Says I to the landlady, who was crying and wringing her hands, 'Why not come to the country where there's no taxes at all, nor rent either, if you choose?' Then it would frighten one, all she counted up on her fingers—poor-rate, paving-rate, water-rate, lighting, income-tax, and no end of others. I reckon that's what you pay for your high civilization. Now with us, there's a water privilege on a'most every farm, and a pile of maple-logs has fire and gaslight in it for the whole winter; and there's next to no poor, for every man and woman that's got hands and health can make a living. Why, your civilization is your misfortune in the old country; you've got to support a lot of things and people besides yourself and your family."

"Surely you are not quite without taxes," said the other.

"Oh, we lay a trifle on ourselves for roads and bridges and schools, and such things. There's custom houses at the ports; but if a man chooses to live without tea or foreign produce, he won't be touched by the indirect taxes either. I guess we've the advantage of you there. You can't hardly eat or drink, or walk or ride, or do anything else, without a tax somewhere in the background slily sucking your pocket."

"A United States citizen," thought Robert Wynn. "What a peculiar accent he has! and the national swagger too." And Mr. Wynn, feeling intensely British, left his box, and walked into the midst of the room with his newspaper, wishing to suggest the presence of a third person. He glanced at the American, a middle-aged, stout-built man, with an intelligent and energetic countenance, who returned the glance keenly. There was something indescribably foreign about his dress, though in detail it was as usual; and his manner and air were those of one not accustomed to the conventional life of cities. His companion was a tall, pale, elderly person, who bore his piping voice in his appearance, and seemed an eager listener.

"And you say that I would make an independence if I emigrated?" asked the latter, fidgetting nervously with a piece of paper.

"Any man would who has pluck and perseverance. You would have to work hard, though;" and his eyes fell on the white irresolute hands, dubious as to the requisite qualities being there indicated. "You'd want a strong constitution if you're for the backwoods."

"The freedom of a settler's life, surrounded by all the beauties of nature, would have great charms for me," observed the other.

"Yes," replied the American, rather drily; "but I reckon you wouldn't see many beauties till you had a log shanty up, at all events. Now that young man"—he had caught Robert Wynn's eye on him again—"is the very build for emigration. Strong, active, healthy, wide awake: no offence, young gentleman, but such as you are badly wanted in Canada West."

From this began a conversation which need not be minutely detailed. It was curious to see what a change was produced in Robert's sentiments towards the settler, by learning that he was a Canadian, and not a United States man: "the national swagger" became little more than a dignified assertion of independence, quite suitable to a British subject; the accent he had disliked became an interesting local characteristic. Mr. Hiram Holt was the son of an English settler, who had fixed himself on the left bank of the Ottawa, amid what was then primeval forest, and was now a flourishing township, covered with prosperous farms and villages. Here had the sturdy Saxon struggled with, and finally conquered, adverse circumstances, leaving his eldest son possessed of a small freehold estate, and his other children portioned comfortably, so that much of the neighbourhood was peopled by his descendants. And this, Hiram's first visit to the mother country—for he was Canadian born—was on colonial business, being deputed from his section of the province, along with others, to give evidence, as a landed proprietor, before the Secretary of State, whose gate-lodge his father would have been proud to keep when he was a poor Suffolk labourer.

"Now there's an injustice," quoth Mr. Holt, diverging into politics. "England has forty-three colonies, and but one man to oversee them all—a man that's jerked in and out of office with every successive ministry, and is almost necessarily more intent on party manœuvres than on the welfare of the young nations he rules. Our colony alone—the two Canadas—is bigger than Great Britain and Ireland three times over. Take in all along Vancouver's Island, and it's as big as Europe. *There's* a pretty considerable slice of the globe for one man to manage! But forty-two other colonies have to be managed as well; and I guess a nursery of forty-three children of all ages left to one care-taker would run pretty wild, I do."

"Yet we never hear of mismanagement," observed Robert, in an unlucky moment; for Mr. Hiram Holt retained all the Briton's prerogative of grumbling, and in five minutes had rehearsed a whole catalogue of colonial grievances very energetically.

"Then I suppose you'll be for joining the stars and stripes," said the young man.

"Never!" exclaimed the settler. "Never, while there's a rag of the union jack to run up. But it's getting late;;" and as he rose to his feet with a tremendous yawn, Robert perceived his great length, hitherto concealed by the table on which he leaned. "This life would kill me in six months. In my own place, I'm about the farm at sunrise in summer. Never knew what it was to be sick, young man." And so the party separated; Robert admiring the stalwart muscular frame of the Canadian as he strode before him up the stairs towards their sleeping rooms. As he passed Mr. Holt's door, he caught a glimpse of bare floor, whence all the carpets had been rolled off into a corner, every vestige of curtain tucked away, and the window sashes open to their widest. Subsequently he learned that to such domestic softnesses as carpets and curtains the sturdy settler had invincible objections, regarding them as symptoms of effeminacy not suitable to his character, though admitting that for women they were well enough.

Robert was all night felling pines, building log-huts, and wandering amid interminable forests; and when his shaving water and boots awoke him at eight, he was a little surprised to find himself a denizen of a London hotel. Mr. Holt had gone out hours before. After a hasty breakfast Mr. Wynn ordered a cab, and proceeded to the residence of the hon. member for C—— county.

It was a mansion hired for the season in one of the fashionable squares; for so had the hon. member's domestic board of control, his lady-wife and daughters, willed. Of course, Robert was immensely too early; he dismissed the cab, and wandered about the neighbourhood, followed by suspicious glances from one or two policemen, until, after calling at the house twice, he was admitted into a library beset with tall dark bookcases. Here sat the M.P. enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, in a handsome morning gown, with bundles of parliamentary papers and a little stack of letters on the table. But none of the legislative literature engrossed his attention just then: the "Morning Post" dropped from his fingers as he arose and shook hands with the son of his constituent.

"Ah, my dear Wynn—how happy—delighted indeed, I assure you. Have you breakfasted? all well at home? your highly honoured father? late sitting at the House last night—close of the session most exhausting even to seasoned members, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer said to me last evening in the lobby;" and here followed an anecdote. But while he thus ran on most affably, the under-current of idea in his mind was somewhat as follows: "What on earth does this young fellow want of me? His family interest in the county almost gone—not worth taking pains to please any longer—a great bore—yet I must be civil;—oh, I recollect Currie Faver's promise—thinks he has given me enough this session—"

Meanwhile, Robert was quite interested by his agreeable small talk. It is so charming to hear great names mentioned familiarly by one personally acquainted with them; to learn that Palmerston and Lord John can breakfast like ordinary mortals. By-and-by, with a blush and a falter (for the mere matter of his personal provision for life seemed so paltry among these world-famed characters and their great deeds, that he was almost ashamed to allude to it), Robert Wynn ventured to make his request, that the hon. member for C—— would go to the hon. Secretary of the Board of Patronage, and claim the fulfilment of his promise. Suddenly the M.P. became grave and altogether the senator, with his finger thoughtfully upon his brow—the identical attitude which Grant had commemorated on canvas, beaming from the opposite wall.

"An unfortunate juncture; close of the session, when everybody wants to be off, and ministers don't need to swell their majorities any longer. I recollect perfectly to what you allude;

but, my dear young friend, all these ministerial promises, as you term them, are more or less conditional, and it may be quite out of Mr. Currie Faver's power to fulfil this."

"Then he should not have made it, sir," said Robert, hotly.

"For instance," proceeded the hon. gentleman, not noticing the interruption, "the new arrangements of the commissioners renders it almost impossible that they should appoint to a clerkship, either supernumerary or otherwise, while they are reducing the ordinary staff. But I'll certainly go to Mr. Faver, and remind him of the circumstance: we can only be refused at worst. You may be assured of my warmest exertions in your behalf: any request from a member of your family ought to be a command with me, Mr. Wynn."

Robert's feelings of annoyance gave way to gratification at Mr. A——'s blandness, which, however, had a slight acid behind.

"And though times are greatly altered, I don't forget our old electioneering, when your father proposed me on my first hustings. Greatly altered, Mr. Wynn; greatly altered. I must go to the morning sitting now, but I'll send you a note as to the result of my interview. You must have much to see about London. I quite envy you your first visit to such a world of wonders; I am sure you will greatly enjoy it. Good morning, Mr. Wynn. I hope I shall have good news for you."

And so Robert was bowed out, to perambulate the streets in rather bitter humour. Was he to return to the poor scantily supplied home, and continue a drag on its resources, lingering out his days in illusive hopes? Oh that his strong hands and strong heart had some scope for their energies! He paused in one mighty torrent of busy faces and eager footsteps, and despised himself for his inaction. All these had business of one kind or other; all were earnestly intent upon their calling; but he was a waif and a straw on the top of the tide, with every muscle stoutl strung, and every faculty of his brain clear and sound. Would he let the golden years of his youth slip by, without laying any foundation for independence? Was this Civil Service appointment worth the weary waiting? Emigration had often before presented itself as a course offering certain advantages. Mr. Holt's conversation had brightened the idea. For his family, as well as for himself, it would be beneficial. The poor proud father, who had frequently been unable to leave his house for weeks together, through fear of arrest for debt, would be happier with an ocean between him and the ancestral estates, thronged with memories of fallen affluence: the young brothers, Arthur and George, who were nearing man's years without ostensible object or employment, would find both abundantly in the labour of a new country and a settler's life. Robert had a whole picture sketched and filled in during half an hour's sit in the dingy coffee room; from the shanty to the settlement was portrayed by his fertile fancy, till he was awakened from his reverie by the hearty voice of Hiram Holt.

"I thought for a minute you were asleep, with your hat over your eyes. I hope you're thinking of Canada, young man?"

Robert could not forbear smiling.

"Now," said Mr. Holt, apparently speaking aloud a previous train of thought, "of all things in this magnificent city of yours, which I'm free to confess beats Quebec and Montreal by a long chalk, nothing seems queerer to me than the thousands of young men in your big shops, who are satisfied to struggle all their lives in a poor unmanly way, while our millions of acres are calling out for hands to fell the forests and own the estates, and create happy homes along our unrivalled rivers and lakes. The young fellow that sold me these gloves"—showing a new pair on his hands—"would make as fine a backwoodsman as I ever saw—six feet high, and strong in proportion. It's the sheerest waste of material to have that fellow selling stockings."

But Mr. Holt found Robert Wynn rather taciturn; whereupon he observed: "I'm long enough in the world, young man, to see that to-day's experience, whatever it has been, has bated your hopes a bit; the crest ain't so plumy as last night. But I say you'll yet bless the disappointment, whatever it is, that forces you over the water to our land of plenty. Come out of this over-crowded nation, out where there's elbow room and free breathing. Tell you what, young man, the world doesn't want you in densely packed England and Ireland, but you're wanted in Canada, every thew and sinew that you have. The market for such as you is overstocked here: out with us you'll be at a premium. Don't be offended if I've spoke plain, for Hiram Holt is not one of them that can chop a pine into matches: whatever I am thinking, out with the whole of it. But if you ever want a friend on the Ottawa——"

Robert asserted that he had no immediate idea of emigration; his prospects at home were not bad, etc. He could not let this rough stranger see the full cause he had for depression.

"Not bad! but I tell you they're nothing compared to the prospects you may carve out for yourself with that clever head and those able hands." Again Mr. Holt seized the opportunity of dilating on the perfections of his beloved colony: had he been a paid agent, he could not have more zealously endeavoured to enlist Robert as an emigrant. But it was all a product of national enthusiasm, and of the pride which Canadians may well feel concerning their magnificent country.

Next morning a few courteous lines from the hon. member for C—— county informed Mr. Wynn, with much regret, that, as he had anticipated, Mr. Currie Faver had for the present no nomination for the department referred to, nor would have for at least twelve months to come.

"Before which time, I trust," soliloquised Robert a little fiercely, "I shall be independent of all their favours." And amidst some severe reflections on the universal contempt accorded to the needy. and the corrupted state of society in England, which estimates a man by the length of his purse chiefly, Robert Wynn formed the resolution that he would go to Canada.

CHAPTER II.

CROSSING THE "FERRY."

Robert Wynn returned home to Dunore, having gained nothing by his London trip but a little of that bitter though salutary tonic called experience. His resolve did not waver—nay, it became his day-dream; but manifold obstacles occurred in the attempt to realize it. Family pride was one of the most stubborn; and not until all hope from home resources was at an end, did his father give consent.

About a month after his meeting with Hiram Holt in the London coffee house, he and his brother Arthur found themselves on board a fine emigrant vessel, passing down the river Lee into Cork harbour, under the leadership of a little black steam-tug. Grievous had been the wailing of the passengers at parting with their kinsfolk on the quay; but, somewhat stilled by this time, they leaned in groups on the bulwarks, or were squatted about on deck among their infinitude of red boxes and brilliant tins, watching the villa-whitened shores gliding by rapidly. Only an occasional vernacular ejaculation, such as "Oh, wirra! wirra!" or, "Och hone, mavrone!" betokened the smouldering remains of emotion in the frieze coats and gaudy shawls assembled for'ard: the wisest of the party were arranging their goods and chattels 'tween-decks, where they must encamp for a month or more; but the majority, with truly Celtic improvidence, will wait till they are turned down at nightfall, and have a general scramble in the dusk.

Now the noble Cove of Cork stretches before them, a sheet of glassy water, dotted with a hundred sail, from the base of the sultry hill faced with terraces and called Queenstown, to the far Atlantic beyond the Heads. Heavy and dark loom the fortified government buildings of Haulbowline and the prisons of Spike Island, casting forbidding shadows on the western margin of the tide. Quickly the steam-tug and her follower thread their way among islets and moored barques and guard ships, southward to the sea. No pause anywhere; the passengers of the brig "Ocean Queen" are shut up in a world of their own for a while; yet they do not feel the bond with mother country quite severed till they have cleared the last cape, and the sea-line lies wide in view; nor even then, till the little black tug casts off the connecting cables, and rounds away back across the bar, within the jaws of the bay.

Hardly a breath of breeze: but such as blows is favourable; and with infinite creaking all sail is set. The sound wakes up emigrant sorrow afresh; the wildly contagious Irish cry is raised, much to the discomposure of the captain, who stood on the quarter deck with Robert Wynn.

"The savages! they will be fitting mates for Red Indians, and may add a stave or two to the war-whoop. One would think they were all going to the bottom immediately." He walked forward to quell the noise, if possible, but he might as well have stamped and roared at Niagara. Not a voice cared for his threats or his rage, but those within reach of his arm. The choleric little man had to come back baffled.

"Masther Robert, would *ye* like 'em to stop?" whispered a great hulking peasant who had been looking on; "for if ye would, I'll do it while ye'd be taking a pinch o' snuff."

Andy Callaghan disappeared somewhere for a moment, and presently emerged with an old violin, which he began to scrape vigorously. Even his tuning was irresistibly comical; and he had not been playing a lively jig for ten minutes, before two or three couples were on their feet, performing the figure. Soon an admiring circle, four deep, collected about the dancers. The sorrows of the exiles were effectually diverted, for that time.

"A clever fellow," quoth the captain, regarding Andy's red hair and twinkling eyes with some admiration. "A diplomatic tendency, Mr. Wynn, which may be valuable. Your servant, I presume?"

"A former tenant of my father's, who wished to follow our fortunes," replied Robert. "He's a faithful fellow, though not much more civilized than the rest."

That grand ocean bluff, the Old Head of Kinsale, was now in the offing, and misty ranges of other promontories beyond, at whose base was perpetual foam. Robert turned away with a sigh, and descended to the cabins. In the small square box allotted to them, he found Arthur lying in his berth, reading Mrs. Traill's "Emigrant's Guide."

"I've been wondering what became of you; you've not been on deck since we left Cork."

"Of course not. I should have been blubbering like a schoolboy; and as I had enough of that last night, I mean to stay here till we're out of sight of land."

Little trace of the stoicism he professed was to be seen in the tender eyes which had for an hour been fixed on the same page; but Arthur was not yet sufficiently in manhood's years to know that deep feeling is an honour, and not a weakness.

Towards evening, the purple mountain ranges of Kerry were fast fading over the waters; well-known peaks, outlines familiar from childhood to the dwellers at Dunore, were sinking beneath the great circle of the sea. Cape Clear is left behind and the lonely

Fassnet lighthouse; the "Ocean Queen" is coming to the blue water, and the long solemn swell raises and sinks her with pendulum-like regularity.

"Ah, then, Masther Robert, an' we're done wid the poor ould counthry for good an' all!" Andy Callaghan's big bony hands are clasped in a tremor of emotion that would do honour to a picturesque Italian exile. "The beautiful ould counthry, as has the greenest grass that ever grew, an' the clearest water that ever ran, an' the purtiest girls in the wide world! An' we're goin' among sthrangers, to pull an' dhrag for our bit to ate; but we'll never be happy till we see them blue hills and green fields once more!"

Mr. Wynn could almost have endorsed the sentiment just then. Perhaps Andy's low spirits were intensified by the uncomfortable motion of the ship, which was beginning to strike landsmen with that rolling headache, the sure precursor of a worse visitation. Suffice it to say, that the mass of groaning misery in the steerage and cabins, on the subsequent night, would melt the heart of any but the most hardened "old salt." Did not Robert and Arthur regret their emigration bitterly, when shaken by the fangs of the fell demon, sea-sickness? Did not a chance of going to the bottom seem a trivial calamity? Answer, ye who have ever been in like pitiful case. We draw a curtain over the abject miseries of three days; over the Dutch-built captain's unseasonable joking and huge laughter—he, that could eat junk and biscuit if the ship was in Maelstrom! Robert could have thrown his boots at him with pleasure, while the short, broad figure stood in the doorway during his diurnal visit, chewing tobacco, and talking of all the times he had crossed "the ferry," as he familiarly designated the Atlantic Ocean. The sick passengers, to a man, bore him an animosity, owing to his ostentatiously rude health and iron nerves, which is, of all exhibitions, the most oppressive to a prostrate victim of the sea-fiend

The third evening, an altercation became audible on the companion ladder, as if some ship's officer were keeping back somebody else who was determined to come below.

"That's Andy Callaghan's voice," said Arthur.

"Let me down, will ye, to see the young masthers?" came muffled through the doors and partition. "Look here, now" —in a coaxing tone—"I don't like to be cross; but though I'm so bad afther the sickness, I'd set ye back in your little hole there at the fut of the stairs as asy as I'd put a snail in its shell."

At this juncture Robert opened their state-room door, and prevented further collision. Andy's lean figure had become gaunter than ever.

"They thought to keep me from seeing ye, the villains! I'd knock every mother's son of 'em into the middle o' next week afore I'd be kep' away. Sure I was comin' often enough before, but the dinth of the sickness prevented me; an' other times I was chucked about like a child's marvel, pitched over an' hether by the big waves banging the side of the vessel. Masther Robert, asthore, it's I that's shaking in the middle of my iligant new frieze shute like a withered pea in a pod—I'm got so thin intirely."

"We are not much better ourselves," said Arthur, laughing; "but I hope the worst of it is over."

"I'd give the full of my pockets in goold, if I had it this minit," said Andy, with great emphasis, "to set me foot on the nakedest sod of bog that's in Ould Ireland this day! an' often I abused it; but throth, the purtiest sight in life to me would be a good pratie-field, an' meself walkin' among the ridges!"

"Well, Andy, we mustn't show the white feather in that way; we could not expect to get to America without being sick, or suffering some disagreeables."

"When yer honours are satisfied, 'tisn't for the likes of me to grumble," Andy said resignedly. "Only if everybody knew what was before them, they mightn't do many a thing, maybe!"

"Very true, Andy."

"So we're all sayin' down in the steerage, sir. But oh, Masther Robert, I a'most forgot to tell ye, account of that spalpeen that thought to hindher yer own fosther-brother from comin' to see ye; but there's the most wondherful baste out in the say this minit; an' it's spoutin' up water like the fountain that used to be at Dunore, only a power bigger; an' lyin' a-top of the waves like an island, for all the world? I'm thinkin' he wouldn't make much of cranching up the ship like a hazel nut."

"A whale! I wonder will they get out the boats?" said Arthur, with sudden animation. "I think I'm well enough to go on deck, Bob: I'd like to have a shot at the fellow."

"A very useless expenditure of powder," rejoined Robert. But Arthur, boylike, sprung upstairs with the rifle, which had often done execution among the wildfowl of his native moorlands. Certainly it was a feat to hit such a prominent mark as that mountain of blubber; and Arthur felt justly ashamed of himself, when the animal beat the water furiously, and dived headlong in his pain.

Now, the only other cabin passengers on board the brig were a retired military officer and his family, consisting of a son and two daughters. They had made acquaintance with the Wynns on the first day of the voyage, but since then there had been a necessary suspension of intercourse. And it was a certain mild but decided disapproval in Miss Armytage's grave glance, when Arthur turned round and saw her sitting on the poop with her father and little sister, which brought the colour to his cheek, for he felt he had been guilty of thoughtless and wanton cruelty. He bowed and moved further away. But Robert joined them, and passed half an hour very contentedly in gazing at a grand sunset. The closing act of which was as follows: a dense black brow of cloud on the margin of the sea; beneath it burst a flaming bolt of light from the sun's great eye, along the level waters. Far in the zenith were broad beams radiating across other clouds, like golden pathways. Slowly the dark curtain seemed to close down over the burning glory at the horizon. "How very beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Armytage.

"Yes, my dear Edith, except as a weather barometer," said her father. "In that point of view it means—storm."

"Oh, papa!" ejaculated the little girl, nestling close—not to him, but to her elder sister, whose hand instantly clasped hers with a reassuring pressure, while the quiet face looked down at the perturbed child, smiling sweetly. It was almost the first smile Robert had seen on her face; it made Miss Armytage quite handsome for the moment, he thought.

Miss Armytage, caring very little for his thought, was occupied an instant with saying something in a low tone to Jay, which gradually brightened the small countenance again. Robert caught the words, "Our dear Saviour." They reminded him of his mother.

Captain Armytage was correct in his prediction; before midnight a fierce north-easter was raging on the sea. The single beneficial result was, that it fairly cured all maladies but terror; for, after clinging to their berths during some hours with every muscle of their bodies, lest they should be swung off and smashed in the lurches of the vessel, the passengers arose next morning, well and hungry.

"I spind the night on me head, mostly," said Andy Callaghan. "Troth, I never knew before how the flies managed to walk on the ceilin' back downwards; but a thrifle more o' practice would tache it to meself, for half me time the floor was above at the rafters over me head. I donno rightly how to walk on my feet the day afther it."

This was the only bad weather they experienced, as viewed nautically: even the captain allowed that it had been "a stiffish gale;" but subsequent tumults of the winds and waves, which seemed tremendous to unsophisticated landsmen, were to him mere ocean frolics. And so, while each day the air grew colder, they neared the banks of Newfoundland, where everybody who could devise fishing tackle tried to catch the famous cod of those waters. Arthur was one of the successful captors, having spent a laborious day in the main-chains for the purpose. At eventide he was found teaching little Jay how to hold a line, and how to manage when a bite came. Her mistakes and her delight amused him: both lasted till a small panting fish was pulled up.

"There's a whiting for you now," said he, "all of your own catching."

Jay looked at it regretfully, as the poor little gills opened and shut in vain efforts to breathe the smothering air, and the pretty silver colouring deadened as its life went. "I am very sorry," she said, folding her hands together; "I think I ought not to have killed it only to amuse myself:" and she walked away to where her sister was sitting.

"What a strange child!" thought Arthur, as he watched the little figure crossing the deck. But he wound up the tackle, and angled no more for that evening.

The calm was next day deepened by a fog; a dense haze settled on the sea, seeming by sheer weight to still its restless motion. Now was the skipper much more perturbed than during the rough weather: wrapt in a mighty pea-coat, he kept a perpetual look-out in person, chewing the tobacco meanwhile as if he bore it an animosity. Frequent gatherings of drift-ice passed, and at times ground together with a disagreeably strong sound. An intense chill pervaded the atmosphere—a cold unlike what Robert or Arthur had ever felt in the frosts of Ireland, it was so much more keen and penetrating.

"The captain says it is from icebergs," said the latter, drawing up the collar of his great coat about his ears, as they walked the deck. "I wish we saw one—at a safe distance, of course. But this fog is so blinding——"

Even as he spoke, a vast whitish berg loomed a-beam, immensely higher than the topmasts, in towers and spires snow-crested. What great precipices of grey glistening ice, as it passed by, a mighty half-distinguishable mass! what black rifts of destructive depth! The ship surged backward before the great refluent wave of its movement. A sensation of awe struck the bravest beholder, as slowly and majestically the huge berg glided astern, and its grim features were obliterated by the heavy haze.

Both drew a relieved breath when the grand apparition had passed. "I wish Miss Armytage had seen it," said Arthur.

"Why?" rejoined Robert, though the same thought was just in his own mind.

"Oh, because it was so magnificent, and I am sure she would admire it. I could almost make a poem about it myself. Don't you know the feeling, as if the sight were too large, too imposing for your mind somehow? And the danger only intensifies that."

"Still, I wish we were out of their reach. The skipper's temper will be unbearable till then."

It improved considerably when the fog rose off the sea, a day or two subsequently, and a head-wind sprang up, carrying them towards the Gulf. One morning, a low grey stripe of cloud on the horizon was shown to the passengers as part of Newfoundland. Long did Robert Wynn gaze at that dim outline, possessed by all the strange feelings which belong to the first sight of the new world, especially when it is to be a future home. No shame to his manhood if some few tears for the dear old home dimmed his eyes as he looked. But soon that shadow of land disappeared, and, passing Cape Ray at a long distance, they entered the great estuary of the St. Lawrence, which mighty inlet, if it had place in our little Europe, would be fitly termed the Sea of Labrador; but where all the features of Nature are colossal, it ranks only as a gulf.

One morning, when little Jay had gone on deck for an ante-breakfast run, she came back in a state of high delight to the cabin. "Oh, Edith, such beautiful birds! such lovely little birds! and the sailors say they're from the land, though we cannot see it anywhere. How tired they must be after such a long fly, all the way from beyond the edge of the sea! Do come and look at them, dear Edith—do come!"

Sitting on the shrouds were a pair of tiny land birds, no bigger than tomtits, and wearing red top-knots on their heads. How welcome were the confiding little creatures to the passengers, who had been rocked at sea for nearly five weeks, and hailed these as sure harbingers of solid ground! They came down to pick up Jay's crumbs of biscuit, and twittered familiarly. The captain offered to have one caught for her, but, after a minute's eager acquiescence, she declined. "I would like to feel it in my hand," said she, "but it is kinder to let it fly about wherever it pleases."

"Why, you little Miss Considerate, is that your principle always?" asked Arthur, who had made a great playmate of her. She did not understand his question; and on his explaining in simpler words, "Oh, you know I always try to think what God would like. That is sure to be right, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," said Arthur, with sudden gravity.

"Edith taught me—she does just that," continued the child. "I don't think *she* ever does anything that is wrong at all. But oh, Mr. Wynn," and he felt a sudden tightening of her grasp on his hand, "what big bird is that? look how frightened the little ones are!"

A hawk, which had been circling in the air, now made a swoop on the rigging, but was anticipated by his quarry: one of the birds flew actually into Arthur's hands, and the other got in among some barrels which stood amidships.

"Ah," said Arthur, "they were driven out here by that chap, I suppose. Now I'll give you the pleasure of feeling one of them in your hands."

"But that wicked hawk!"

"And that wicked Jay, ever to eat chickens or mutton."

"Ah! but that is different. How his little heart beats, and flutters. I wish I had him for a pet. I would love you, little birdie, indeed I would."

For some days they stayed by the ship, descending on deck for crumbs regularly furnished them by Jay, to whom the office of feeding them was deputed by common consent. But nearing the Island of Anticosti, they took wing for shore with a parting twitter, and, like Noah's dove, did not return. Jay would not allow that they were ungrateful.

CHAPTER III.

UP THE ST. LAWRENCE.

Little Jay could hardly be persuaded into the belief that they were now sailing on a river; that the swift broad tide bearing against them, more than one hundred and twenty miles across at this island of Anticosti, was the mouth of a stream having source in a mountain far away, and once narrow enough to step over. Arthur showed her the St. Lawrence on a map hung in the saloon; but such demonstration did not seem to convince her much. "Then where are the banks? My geography says that a river always has banks," was her argument.

In the evening he was able to show her the wide pitiless snow ranges of Labrador, whence blew a keen desert air. Perpetual pine-woods—looking like a black band set against the encroaching snow—edged the land, whence the brig was some miles distant, tacking to gain the benefit of the breeze off shore.

Presently came a strange and dismal sound wafted over the waters from the far pine forests—a high prolonged howl, taken up and echoed by scores of ravenous throats, repeated again and again, augmenting in fierce cadences. Jay caught Mr. Wynn's arm closer. "Like wolves," said Arthur; "but we are a long way off."

"I must go and tell Edith," said the child, evidently feeling safer with that sister than in any other earthly care. After he had brought her to the cabin, he returned on deck, listening with a curious sort of pleasure to the wild sounds, and looking at the dim outlines of the shore.

As darkness dropped over the circle of land and water, a light seemed to arise behind those hills, revealing their solid shapes anew, stealing silently aloft into the air, like a pale and pure northern dawn. At first he thought it must be the rising moon, but no orb appeared; and as the brilliance deepened, intensified into colour, and shot towards the zenith, he knew it for the aurora borealis. Soon the stars were blinded out by the vivid sweeping flicker of its rays; hues bright and varied as the rainbow thrilled along the iridescent roadways to the central point above, and tongues of flame leaped from arches in the north-west. Burning scarlet and amber, purple, green, trembled in pulsations across the ebony surface of the heavens, as if some vast fire beneath the horizon was flashing forth coruscations of its splendour to the dark hemisphere beyond. The floating banners of angels is a hackneyed symbol to express the oppressive magnificence of a Canadian aurora.

The brothers were fascinated: their admiration had no words.

"This is as bad as the iceberg for making a fellow's brain feel too big for his head," said Arthur at last. "We've seen two sublime things, at all events, Bob."

Clear frosty weather succeeded—weather without the sharp sting of cold, but elastic and pure as on a mountain peak. Being becalmed for a day or two off a wooded point, the skipper sent a boat ashore for fuel and water. Arthur eagerly volunteered to help; and after half-an-hour's rowing through the calm blue bay, he had the satisfaction to press his foot on the soil of Lower Canada.

There was a small clearing beside a brook which formed a narrow deep cove, a sort of natural miniature dock where their boat floated. A log hut, mossed with years, was set back some fifty yards towards the forest. What pines were those! what giants of arborescence! Seventy feet of massive shaft without a bough; and then a dense thicket of black inwoven branches, making a dusk beneath the fullest sunshine.

"I tell you we haven't trees in the old country; our oaks and larches are only shrubs," he said to Robert, when narrating his expedition. "Wait till you see pines such as I saw to-day. Looking along the forest glades, those great pillars upheld the roof everywhere in endless succession. And the silence! as if a human creature never breathed among them, though the log hut was close by. When I went in, I saw a French *habitan*, as they call him, who minds the lighthouse on the point, with his Indian wife, and her squaw mother dressed in a blanket, and of course babies—the queerest little brown things you ever saw. One of them was tied into a hollow board, and buried to the chin in 'punk,' by way of bed-clothes.'

"And what is punk?" asked Robert.

"Rotten wood powdered to dust," answered Arthur, with an air of superior information. "It's soft enough; and the poor little animal's head was just visible, so that it looked like a young live mummy. But the grandmother squaw was even uglier than the grandchildren; a thousand and one lines seamed her coppery face, which was the colour of an old penny piece rather burnished from use. And she had eyes, Bob, little and wide apart, and black as sloes, with a snaky look. I don't think she ever took them off me, and 'twas no manner of use to stare at her in return. So, as I could not understand what they were saying—gabbling a sort of *patois* of bad French and worse English, with a sprinkling of Indian—and as the old lady's gaze was getting uncomfortable, I went out again among my friends, the mighty pines. I hope we shall have some about our location, wherever we settle."

"And I trust more intimate acquaintance won't make us wish them a trifle fewer and slighter," remarked Robert.

"Well, I am afraid my enthusiasm would fade before an acre of such clearing," rejoined Arthur. "But, Bob, the colours of the foliage are lovelier than I can tell. You see a little of the tinting even from this distance. The woods have taken pattern by the aurora: it seems we are now in the Indian summer, and the maple trees are just burning with scarlet and gold leaves."

"I suppose you did not see many of our old country trees?"

"Hardly any. Pine is the most plentiful of all: how I like its sturdy independent look! as if it were used to battling with snow-storms, and got strong by the exercise. The mate showed me hickory and hemlock, and a lot of other foreigners, while the men were cutting logs in the bush."

"You have picked up the Canadian phraseology already," observed Robert.

"Yes;" and Arthur reddened slightly. "Impossible to avoid that, when you're thrown among fellows that speak nothing else. But I wanted to tell you, that coming back we hailed a boat from one of those outward-bound ships lying yonder at anchor: the mate says their wood and water is half a pretence. They are smuggling skins, in addition to their regular freight of lumber."

"Smuggling skins!"

"For the skippers' private benefit, you understand: furs, such as sable, marten, and squirrel; they send old ship's stores ashore to trade with vagrant Indians, and then sew up the skins in their clothes, between the lining and the stuff, so as to pass the Custom House officers at home. Bob! I'm longing to be ashore for good. You don't know what it is to feel firm ground under one's feet after six weeks' unsteady footing. I'm longing to get out of this floating prison, and begin our life among the pines."

Robert shook his head a little sorrowfully. Now that they were nearing the end of the voyage, many cares pressed upon him, which to the volatile nature of Arthur seemed only theme for adventure. Whither to bend their steps in the first instance, was a matter for grave deliberation. They had letters of introduction to a gentleman near Carillon on the Ottawa, and others to a family at Toronto. Former friends had settled beside the lonely Lake Simcoe, midway between Huron and Ontario. Many an hour of the becalmed days he spent over the maps and guide books they had brought, trying to study out a result. Jay came up to him one afternoon, as he leaned his head on his hand perplexedly.

"What ails you? have you a headache?"

"No, I am only puzzled."

Her own small elbow rested on the taffrail, and her little fingers dented the fair round cheek, in unwitting imitation of his posture.

"Is it about a lesson? But you don't have to get lessons."

"No; it is about what is best for me to do when I land."

"Edith asks God always; and he shows her what is best," said the child, looking at him wistfully. Again he thought of his pious prayerful mother. She might have spoken through the childish lips. He closed his books, remarking that they were stupid. Jay gave him her hand to walk up and down the deck. He had never made it a custom to consult God, or refer to him in matters of daily life, though theoretically he acknowledged his pervading sovereignty. To procure the guidance of Infinite Wisdom would be well worth a prayer. Something strong as a chain held him back—the pride of his consciously unrenewed heart.

When the weather became favourable, they passed up the river rapidly; and a succession of the noblest views opened around them. No panorama of the choice spots of earth could be lovelier. Lofty granite islets, such as Kamouraska, which attains an altitude of five hundred feet; bold promontories and deep basin bays; magnificent ranges of bald blue mountains inland; and, as they neared Grosse Isle and the quarantine ground, the soft beauties of civilization were superadded. Many ships of all nations lay at anchor; the shore was dotted with white farmhouses, and neat villages clustered each round the glittering spire of a church.

"How very French that is, eh?" said Captain Armytage, referring to those shining metal roofs. "Tinsel is charming to the eyes of a *habitan*. You know, I've been in these parts before with my regiment; so I am well acquainted with the ground. We have the parish of St. Thomas to our left now, thickly spotted with white cottages: St. Joachim is on the opposite bank. The nomenclature all about here smacks of the prevailing faith and of the old masters."

"'Tis a pity they didn't hold by the musical Indian names," said Robert Wynn.

"Well, yes, when the music don't amount to seventeen syllables a-piece, eh?" Captain Armytage had a habit of saying "eh" at every available point in his sentences. Likewise had he the most gentleman-like manners that could be, set off by the most gentleman-like personal appearance; yet, an inexplicable something about him prevented a thorough liking. Perhaps it was the intrinsic selfishness, and want of sincerity of nature, which one instinctively felt after a little intercourse had worn off the dazzle of his engaging demeanour. Perhaps Robert had detected the odour of rum, ineffectually concealed by the fragrance of a smoking pill, more frequently than merely after dinner, and seen the sad shadow on his daughter's face, following. But that did not prevent Captain Armytage's being a very agreeable and well-informed companion nevertheless.

"Granted that 'Canada' is a pretty name," said he; "but it's Spanish more than native. 'Aca nada'—nothing here—said the old Castilian voyagers, when they saw no trace of gold mines or other wealth along the coast. That's the story, at all events. But I hold to it that our British John Cabot was the first who ever visited this continent, unless there's truth in the old Scandinavian tales, which I don't believe."

But the gallant officer's want of credence does not render it the less a fact, that, about the year 1001, Biorn Heriolson, an Icelander, was driven south from Greenland by tempestuous weather, and discovered Labrador. Subsequently, a colony was established for trading purposes on some part of the coast named Vinland; but after a few Icelanders had made fortunes of the peltries, and many had perished among the Esquimaux, all record of the settlement is blotted out, and Canada fades from the world's map till restored by the explorations of the Cabots and Jacques Cartier. The two former examined the seaboard, and the latter first entered the grand estuary of the St. Lawrence, which he named from the Saint's day of its discovery; and he also was the earliest white man to gaze down from the mighty precipice of Quebec, and pronounce the obscure Indian name which was hereafter to suggest a world-famed capital. Then, the dwellings and navies of nations and generations yet unborn were growing all around in hundreds of leagues of forest; a dread magnificence of shade darkened the face of the earth, amid which the red man reigned supreme. Now, as the passengers of the good brig "Ocean Queen" gazed upon it three centuries subsequently, the slow axe had chopped away those forests of pines, and the land was smiling with homesteads and mapped out in fields of rich farm produce: the encroachments of the irresistible white man had metamorphosed the country, and almost blotted out its olden masters. Robert Wynn began to realize the force of Hiram Holt's patriotic declaration, "It's the finest country in the world!"

"And the loveliest!" he could have added, without even a saving clause for his own old emerald isle, when they passed the western point of the high wooded island of Orleans, and came in view of the superb falls of Montmorenci; two hundred and fifty feet of sheer precipice, leaped by a broad full torrent, eager to reach the great river flowing beyond, and which seemed placidly to await the turbulent onset. As Robert gazed, the fascination of a great waterfall came over him like a spell. Who has not felt this beside Lodore, or Foyers, or Torc? Who has not found his eye mesmerized by the falling sheet of dark polished waters, merging into snowy spray and crowned with rainbow crest, most changeable, yet most unchanged?

Thousands of years has this been going on; you may read it in the worn limestone layers that have been eaten through, inches in centuries, by the impetuous stream. Thus, also, has the St. Lawrence carved out its mile-wide bed beneath the Heights of Abraham —the stepping-stone to Wolfe's fame, and Canadian freedom.

CHAPTER IV.

WOODEN-NESS.

Piled on the summit of Cape Diamond, and duplicated in shadow upon the deep waters at its base, three hundred feet below, stands the fortress of Quebec. Edinburgh and Ehrenbreitstein have been used as old-world symbols to suggest its beauty and strength; but the girdle of mighty river is wanting to the former, and the latter is a trifling miniature of the Canadian city-queen. Robert Wynn knew of no such comparisons; he only felt how beautiful was that mass of interwoven rock, and wood, and town, reflected and rooted in the flood; he scarcely heard Captain Armytage at his left reminding him for the tenth time that he had been here before with his regiment.

"There's Point Levi to the south, a mile away, in front of the mountains. Something unpleasant once befell me in crossing there. I and another sub. hired a boat for a spree, just because the hummocks of ice were knocking about on the tide, and all prudent people staid ashore; but we went out in great dreadnought boots, and bearskin caps over our ears, and amused ourselves with pulling about for a while among the floes. I suppose the grinding of the ice deafened us, and the hummocks hid us from view of the people on board; at all events, down came one of the river steamers slap on us. I saw the red paddles laden with ice at every revolution, and the next instant was sinking, with my boots dragging me down like a cannon-ball at my feet. I don't know how I kicked them off, and rose: Gilpin, the other sub., had got astride on the capsized boat; a rope flung from the steamer struck me, and you may believe I grasped it pretty tightly. D'ye see here?" and he showed Robert a front tooth broken short: "I caught with my hands first, and they were so numb, and the ice forming so fast on the dripping rope, that it slipped till I held by my teeth; and another noose being thrown around me lasso-wise, I was dragged in. A narrow escape, eh?"

"Very narrow," echoed Robert. He noticed the slight shiver that ran through the daughter's figure, as she leaned on her father's arm. His handsome face looked down at her carelessly.

"Edith shudders," said he; "I suppose thinking that so wonderful an escape ought to be remembered as more than a mere adventure." To which he received no answer, save an appealing look from her soft eyes. He turned away with a short laugh.

"Well, at all events it cured me of boating among the ice. Ugh! to be sucked in and smothered under a floe would be frightful."

Mr. Wynn wishing to say something that would prove he was not thinking of the little aside-scene between father and daughter, asked if the St. Lawrence was generally so full of ice in winter.

It was difficult to believe, now in the balmy atmosphere of the Indian summer, with a dreamy sunshine warming and gladdening all things—the very apotheosis of autumn—that wintry blasts would howl along this placid river, surging fierce ice-waves together, before two months should pass.

"There's rarely a bridge quite across," replied Captain Armytage; "except in the north channel, above the Isle of Orleans, where the tide has less force than in the southern, because it is narrower; but in the widest place the hummocks of ice are frequently crushed into heaps fifteen or twenty feet high, which makes navigation uncomfortably exciting."

"I should think so," rejoined Robert, drily.

"Ah, you have yet to feel what a Canadian winter is like, my young friend;" and Captain Armytage nodded in that mysterious manner which is intended to impress a "griffin" with the cheering conviction that unknown horrors are before him.

"I wonder what is that tall church, whose roof glitters so intensely?"

"The cathedral, under its tin dome and spires. The metal is said to hinder the lodging and help the thawing of the snow, which might otherwise lie so heavy as to endanger the roof."

"Oh, that is the reason!" ejaculated Robert, suddenly enlightened as to the needs-be of all the surface glitter.

"Rather a pretty effect, eh? and absolutely unique, except in Canadian cities. It suggests an infinitude of greenhouses reflecting sunbeams at a variety of angles of incidence."

"I presume this is the lower town, lying along the quays?" said Robert.

"Yes, like our Scottish Edinburgh, the old city, being built in dangerous times, lies huddled close together under protection of its guardian rock," said the Captain. "But within, you could fancy yourself suddenly transported into an old Normandy town, among narrow crooked streets and high-gabled houses: nor will the degree of cleanliness undeceive you. For, unlike most other American cities, Quebec has a Past as well as a Present: there is the French Past, narrow, dark, crowded, hiding under a fortification; and there is the English Present, embodied in the handsome upper town, and the suburb of St. John's, broad, well-built, airy. The line of distinction is very marked between the pushing Anglo-Saxon's premises and the tumble-down concerns of the stand-still *habitan*."

Perhaps, also, something is due to the difference between Protestant enterprise and Roman Catholic supineness.

"There's a boat boarding us already," said Robert.

It proved to be the custom-house officers; and when their domiciliary visit was over, Robert and Arthur went ashore. Navigating through a desert expanse of lumber rafts and a labyrinth of hundreds of hulls, they stepped at last on the ugly wooden wharves which line the water's edge, and were crowded with the usual traffic of a port; yet singularly noiseless, from the boarded pavement beneath the wheels.

Though the brothers had never been in any part of France, the peculiarly French aspect of the lower town struck them immediately. The old-fashioned dwellings, with steep lofty roofs, accumulated in narrow alleys, seemed to date back to an age long anterior to Montcalm's final struggle with Wolfe on the heights; even back, perchance, to the brave enthusiast Champlain's first settlement under the superb headland, replacing the Indian village of Stadacona. To perpetuate his fame, a street alongside the river is called after him; and though his "New France" has long since joined the dead names of extinct colonies, the practical effects of his early toil and struggle remain, in this American Gibraltar which he originated.

Andy Callaghan had begged leave to accompany his young masters ashore, and marched at a respectful distance behind them, along that very Champlain Street, looking about him with unfeigned astonishment. "I suppose the quarries is all used up in these parts, for the houses is wood, an' the churches is wood, and the sthreets has wooden stones ondher our feet," he soliloquized, half audibly. "It's a mighty quare counthry intirely: between the people making a land on top of the wather for 'emselves by thim big rafts, an' buildin' houses on 'em, and kindlin' fires—"

Here his meditation was rudely broken into by the sudden somerset of a child from a doorstep he was passing; but it had scarcely touched the ground when Andy, with an exclamation in Irish, swung it aloft in his arms.

"*Mono mush thig thu!* you crathur, is it trying which yer head or the road is the hardest, ye are? Whisht now, don't cry, me fine boy, and maybe I'd sing a song for ye."

"Wisha then, cead mille failthe a thousand times, Irishman, whoever ye are!" said the mother, seizing Andy's hand. "And my heart warms to the tongue of the old counthry! Won't you come in, honest man, an' rest awhile, an' it's himself will be glad to see ye?"

"And who's himself?" inquired Andy, dandling the child.

"The carpenter, Pat M'Donagh of Ballinoge—"

"Hurroo!" shouted Andy, as he executed a whirligig on one leg, and then embraced the amazed Mrs. M'Donagh fraternally. "My uncle's son's wife! an' a darling purty face you have of yer own too."

"Don't be funnin', now," said the lady, bridling; "an' you might have axed a person's lave before ye tossed me cap that way. Here, Pat, come down an' see yer cousin just arrived from the ould counthry!"

Robert and Arthur Wynn, missing their servitor at the next turn, and looking back, beheld something like a popular *émeute* in the narrow street, which was solely Andy fraternizing with his countrymen and recovered relations.

"Wait a minit," said Andy, returning to his allegiance, as he saw them looking back; "let me run afther the gentlemen and get lave to stay."

"Lave, indeed!" exclaimed the republican-minded Mrs. M'Donagh; "it's I that wud be afther askin lave in a free counthry! Why, we've no masthers nor missusses here at all."

"Hut, woman, but they're my fostherers—the young Mr. Wynns of Dunore."

Great had been that name among the peasantry once; and even yet it had not lost its prestige with the transplanted Pat M'Donagh. He had left Ireland a ragged pauper in the famine year, and was now a thriving artisan, with average wages of seven shillings a day; an independence with which Robert Wynn would have considered himself truly fortunate, and upon less than which many a lieutenant in Her Majesty's infantry has to keep up a gentlemanly appearance. Pat's strength had been a drug in his own country; here it readily worked an opening to prosperity.

And presently forgetting his sturdy Canadian notions of independence, the carpenter was bowing cap in hand before the gentlemen, begging them to accept the hospitality of his house while they stayed in Quebec. "The M'Donaghs is ould tenants of yer honours' father, an' many a kindness they resaved from the family, and 'twould be the joy of me heart to see one of the ancient stock at me table," he said; "an' sure me father's brother's son is along wid ye."

"The ancient stock" declined, with many thanks, as they wanted to see the city; but Andy, not having the same zeal for exploring, remained in the discovered nest of his kinsfolk, and made himself so acceptable, that they parted subsequently with tears.

Meanwhile the brothers walked from the lower to the upper town, through the quaint steep streets of stone houses—relics of the old French occupation. The language was in keeping with this foreign aspect, and the vivacious gestures of the inhabitants told their pedigree. Robert and Arthur were standing near a group of them in the market-square, assembled round a young bear brought in by an Indian, when the former felt a heavy hand on his shoulder, and the next instant the tenacity of his wrist was pretty well tested in the friendly grasp of Hiram Holt.

CHAPTER V.

DEBARKATION.

THE chill of foreignness and loneliness which had been creeping over Robert Wynn's sensations since he had entered the strange city, was dissipated as if a cloud had suddenly lifted off. The friendly face of the colossal Canadian beaming a welcome upon him, with that broad sunshiny smile which seems immediately to raise the temperature of the surrounding air, did certainly warm his heart, and nerve it too. He was not altogether a stranger in a strange land.

"And so you've followed my advice! Bravo, young blood! You'll never be sorry for adopting Canada as your country. Now, what are your plans?" bestowing an aside left-hand grasp upon Arthur. "Can Hiram Holt help you? Have the old people come out? So much the better; they would only cripple you in the beginning. Wait till your axe has cut the niche big enough. You push on for the west, I suppose?"

All these inquiries in little longer than a breath; while he wrung Robert's hand at intervals with a heartiness and power of muscle which almost benumbed the member.

"We have letters to friends on Lake Erie, and to others on Lake Simcoe," said Robert, rescuing his hand, which tingled, and yet communicated a very pleasurable sensation to his heart. "We had not quite decided on our line of march."

"Well, how did you come? Emigrant vessel?"

Adopting the laconic also, Robert nodded, and said it was their first day in Quebec.

"Get quit of her as soon as you can; haul your traps ashore, and come along with me. I'll be going up the Ottawa in a day or two, home; and 'twill be only a step out of your way westward. You can look about you, and see what Canadian life is like for a few weeks; the longer, the more welcome to Hiram Holt's house. Is that fixed?"

Robert was beginning to thank him warmly——

"Now, shut up, young man; I distrust a fellow that has much palaver. *You* look too manly for it. I calculate your capital ain't much above your four hands between you?"

Arthur was rather discomfited at a query so pointed, and so directly penetrating the proud British reserve about monetary circumstances; but Robert, knowing that the motive was kind-hearted, and the manner just that of a straightforward unconventional settler, replied: "You are nearly right, Mr. Holt; our capital in cash is very small; but I hope stout bodies and stout hearts are worth something."

"What would you think of a bush farm? I think I heard you say you had some experience on your father's farm in Ireland?"

"My father's estate, sir," began Arthur, reddening a little.

Holt measured him by a look, but not one of displeasure. "Farms in Canada grow into estates," said he: "by industry and push, I shouldn't be surprised if you became a landed proprietor yourself before your beard is stiff." Arthur had as yet no symptom of that manly adornment, though anxiously watching for the down. The backwoodsman turned to Robert.

"Government lands are cheap enough, no doubt; four shillings an acre, and plenty of them. If you're able, I'd have you venture on that speculation. Purchase-money is payable in ten years; that's a good breathing time for a beginner. But can you give up all luxuries for a while, and eat bread baked by your own hands, and sleep in a log hut on a mess of juniper boughs, and work hard all day at clearing the eternal forests, foot by foot?"

"We can," answered Arthur, eagerly. His brother's assent was not quite so vivacious.

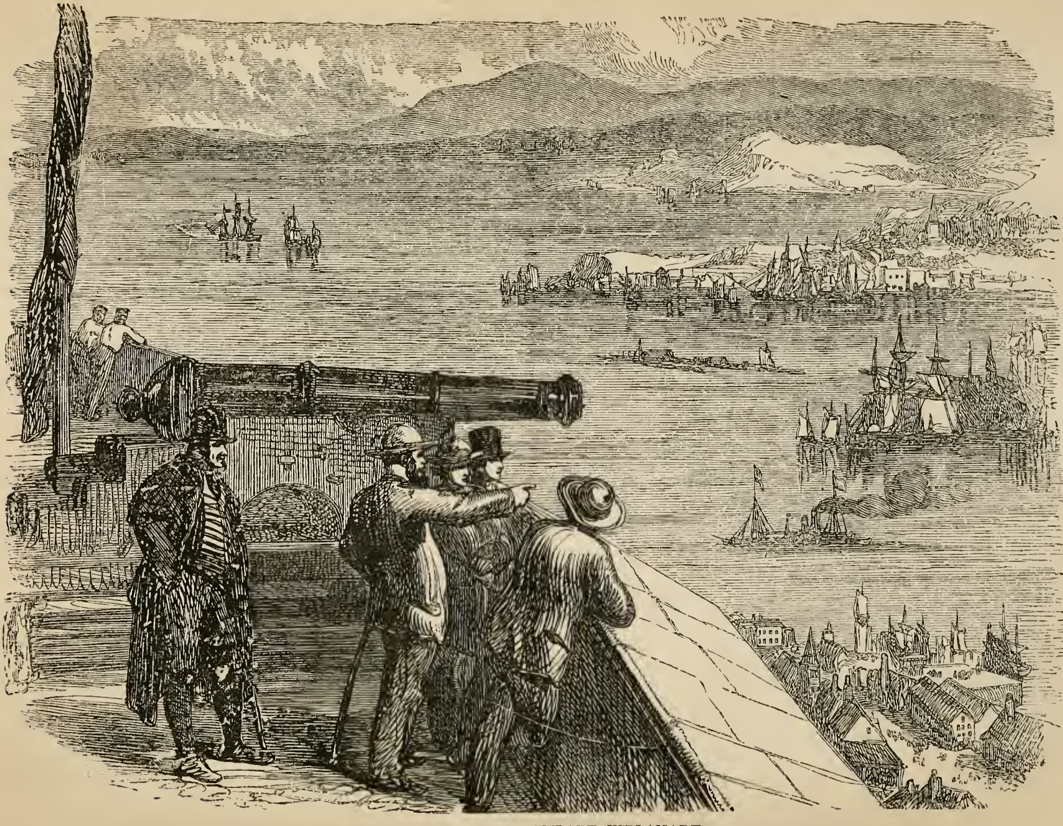
Hiram Holt thought within himself how soon the ardent young spirit might tire of that monotony of labour; how distasteful the utter loneliness and uneventfulness of forest life might become to the undisciplined lad, accustomed, as he shrewdly guessed, to a petted and idling boyhood.

"Well *said*, young fellow. For three years I can't say well *done;* though I hope I may have that to add also."

By this time they had passed from the Market Square to the Esplanade, overhanging the Lower Town, and which commands a view almost matchless for extent and varied beauty. At this hour the shades of evening were settling down, and tinging with sombre hues the colouring of the landscape: over the western edge the sun had sunk; far below, the noble river lay in black shadow and a single gleaming band of dying daylight, as it crept along under the fleets of ships.

Indistinct as the details were becoming, the outlined masses were grander for the growing obscurity, and Robert could not restrain an exclamation of "Magnificent!"

"Well, I won't deny but it *is* handsome," said Mr. Holt, secretly gratified; "I never expect to see anything like it for situation, whatever other way it's deficient. Now I'm free to confess it's only a village to your London, for forty thousand wouldn't be



QUEBEC, FROM THE RAMPART ESPLANADE.

missed out of two or three millions: but bigness ain't the only beauty in the world, else I'd be a deal prettier than my girl Bell, who's not much taller than my walking-stick, and the fairest lass in our township."

The adjective "pretty" seemed so ridiculously inappropriate to one of Mr. Holt's dimensions and hairy development of face, that Robert could not forbear a smile. But the Canadian had returned to the landscape.

"Quebec is the key of Canada, that's certain; and so Wolfe and Montcalm knew, when they fought their duel here for the prize."

Arthur pricked up his ears at the celebrated names. "Oh, Bob, we must try and see the battle-field," he exclaimed, being fresh from Goldsmith's celebrated manual of English history.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Holt. "It lies west on top of the chain of heights flanking the river. A monument to the generals stands near here, in the castle gardens, with the names on opposite sides of the square block. To be sure, how death levels us all! Lord Dalhousie built that obelisk when he was governor in 1827. You see, as it is the only bit of history we possess, we never can commemorate it enough; so there's another pillar on the plains."

Lights began to appear in the vessels below, reflected as long brilliant lines in the glassy deeps. "Perhaps we ought to be getting back to the ship," suggested Robert, "before it is quite dark."

"Of course you are aware that this is the aristocratic section of the town," said Mr. Holt, as they turned to retrace their steps. "Here the citizens give themselves up to pleasure and politics, while the Lower Town is the business place. The money is made there which is spent here; and when our itinerating legislature comes round, Quebec is very gay, and considerably excited."

"Itinerating legislature! what's that?" asked Arthur.

"Why, you see, in 1840 the provinces of Upper and Lower

Canada were legally united; their representatives met in the same House of Assembly, and so forth. Kingston was made the capital, as a central point; however, last year ('49) the famous device of itineration was introduced, by which, every four years, his Excellency the Governor and the Right Honourable Parliament move about from place to place, like a set of travelling showmen."

"And when will Quebec's turn come?"

"In '51, next year. The removal of court patronage is said to have injured the city greatly: like all half-and-half measures, it pleases nobody. Toronto growls, and Kingston growls, and Quebec growls, and Montreal growls; Canada is in a state of chronic dissatisfaction, so far as the towns go. For myself, I never feel at home in Quebec; the lingo of the *habitans* puzzles me, and I'm not used to the dark narrow streets."

"Are you a member of the parliament, Mr. Holt?" asked Arthur.

"No, though I might be," replied Hiram, raising his hat for a moment from his masses of grizzled hair. "I've been town reeve many times, and county warden once. The neighbours wanted to nominate me for the House of Assembly, and son Sam would have attended to the farms and mills; but I had that European trip in my eye, and didn't care. Ah, I see you look at the post-office, young fellow," as they passed that building just outside the gate of the Upper Town wall; "don't get homesick already on our hands; there are no post-offices in the bush."

Arthur looked slightly affronted at this speech, and, to assert his manliness, could have resigned all letters for a twelvemonth. Mr. Holt walked on with a preoccupied air until he said:—

"I must go now, I have an appointment; but I'll be on board to-morrow at noon. The brig 'Ocean Queen,' of Cork, you say? Now your path is right down to Champlain Street; you can't lose your way. Good-bye;" and his receding figure was lost in the dusk, with mighty strides.

"He's too bluff," said Arthur, resenting thus the one or two plain-spoken sentences that had touched himself.

"But sound and steady, like one of his own forest pines," said Robert.

"We have yet to test that," rejoined Arthur, with some truth. "I wonder shall we ever find the house into which Andy was decoyed; those wooden ranges are all the image of one another. I am just as well pleased he wasn't mooning after us through the Upper Town during the daylight; for, though he's such a worthy fellow, he hasn't exactly the cut of a gentleman's servant. We must deprive him of that iligant new frieze top-coat, with its three capes, till it is fashioned into a civilized garment."

Mr. Pat M'Donagh's mansion was wooden—one of a row of such, situated near the dockyard in which he wrought. Andy was already on the look-out from the doorstep; and, conscious that he had been guilty of some approach to excess, behaved with such meek silence and constrained decorum, that his master guessed the cause, and graciously connived at his slinking to his berth as soon as he was up the ship's side.

But when Mr. Wynn walked forward next morning to summon Andy's assistance for his luggage, he found that gentleman the focus of a knot of passengers, to whom he was imparting information in his own peculiar way. "Throth, an' he talks like a book itself," was the admiring comment of a woman with a child on one arm, while she crammed her tins into her red box with the other.

"Every single ha'porth is wood, I tell ye, barrin' the grates; an' tisn't grates they are at all, but shtoves. Sure, I saw 'em at Pat M'Donagh's as black as twelve o'clock at night, an' no more a sign of a blaze out of 'em than there's light from a blind man's eye; an' 'tisn't turf nor coal they burns, but only wood agin. It's I that wud sooner see the plentiful hearths of ould Ireland, where the turf fire cooks the vittles dacently! Oh wirra! why did we ever lave it?"

But Mr. Wynn intercepted the rising chorus by the simple dissyllable, "Andy!"

"Sir, yer honour!" wheeling round, and suddenly resuming a jocose demeanour; "I was only jokin' about bein' back. I must be kapin' up their sperits, the crathurs, that dunno what's before them at all at all; only thinks they're to be all gintlemin an' ladies." This, as he followed his master towards the cabins: "Whisht here, Misther Robert," lowering his tone confidentially. "You'd laugh if you heard what they think their goin' to get. Coinin' would be nothin' to it. That red-headed Biddy Flanagan" (Andy's own chevelure was of carrot tinge, yet he never lost an opportunity of girding at those like-haired), "who couldn't wash a pair of stockings if you gev her a goold guinea, expects twenty pound a-year an' her keep, at the very laste; and Murty Keefe the labourin' boy, that could just trench a ridge of praties, thinks nothin' of tin shillins a-day. They have it all laid out among them iligant. Mrs. Mulrooney is lookin' out for her carriage by'ne-by; an they were abusin' me for not sayin' I'd cut an' run from yer honours, now that I'm across."

"Well, Andy, I'd be sorry to stand in the way of your advancement——"

"Me lave ye, Misther Robert!" in accents of unfeigned surprise; "not unless ye drove me with a whip an' kicked me—is it yer poor fostherer Andy Callaghan? Masther Bob, asthore, ye're all the counthry I have now, an' all the frinds; an' I'll hold by ye, if it be plasin', as long as I've strength to strike a spade."

Tears actually stood in the faithful fellow's eyes. "I believe you, Andy," said his master, giving his hand to the servant for a grasp of friendship, which, if it oftener took place between the horny palm of labour and the whiter fingers of the higher born, would be for the cementing of society by such recognition of human brotherhood.

When Andy had all their luggage on deck in order for the boats, he came up mysteriously to Mr. Wynn, where he stood by the taffrail.

"There's that poor young lady strivin' an' strugglin' to regulate them big boxes, an' her good-for-nothin' father an' brother smokin' in the steerage, an' lavin' everything on her. Fine gintlemin, indeed! More like the Injins, that I'm tould lies in bed while their wives digs the praties!"

Edith Armytage was so well accustomed to such unequal division of labour in her family, that it had long ceased to seem singular to her that she was invariably the worker, who bore the brunt of every labour and of every trouble—on whose forecasting care depended the smooth arrangement of her father's designs; for he could plan well enough, but had a lofty disdain of details. The small matter of the luggage was type of all her experience.

Jay rather enjoyed the hauling about of huge articles, and attempting to bring on deck things much larger than her strength; and when she and Edith were jointly essaying to push and pull up the companion-ladder a carpet-bag of unusual size, it was suddenly lifted from between them, over Jay's head, and borne on deck.

"Oh, Mr. Wynn, thank you!" said the little thing, demurely. "It was a little too big for me and Edith. There is a leather valise besides, that's very heavy;" and she looked a wistful request. Robert thought internally that it would have been good business for the Captain to bring, at least, his own things on deck; and he could not prevail on himself to do more than offer Andy's services as porter, which were gratefully received. Did Miss Armytage's grey eyes, as they rested upon his for a minute, understand his thoughts? Probably; he believed she did. Presently up sauntered her worthy father, wiping his silky moustache and beard from the smoke.

"Well, dear, how have you managed? Beautifully, I have no doubt. She's a model of a daughter, Wynn!"

"Papa, I hope we may soon land; I positively long to tread the firm earth again."

"What would you do if you were rocking and rolling in a transport five months round the Cape? All in good time, dear: I have one or two trifling matters to settle;" and he went down to the cabins.

Just before noon, Hiram Holt stepped on deck.

"I hope you're ready," were the second words of his greeting. "Glorious day for sight-seeing; I've arranged to drive to Cape Rouge over the plains; for we must be off to-morrow, up the river to Montreal. Where are your boxes?"

During a few minutes' delay for the transit of the luggage to the boat, Captain Armytage approached, and with those peculiarly pleasing manners which made him a fascinating man to all who did not know him somewhat deeper than the surface, he engaged Mr. Holt in conversation: he was invited to join the excursion to Wolfe's Cove, and stepped over the side of the ship after the others.

"Reginald! take care of your sisters till my return. They need not go on shore till the afternoon. *Au revoir*;" and he kissed his hand gaily to Miss Armytage and Jay, who stood at the vessel's side. But Robert could not help remembering their expressed anxiety to get ashore, and the captain's fascinations were lost upon him for a good part of their expedition.

Always thus: postponing business and anybody else's pleasure to his own whim or amusement—for he was intrinsically the most selfish of men—Captain Armytage had hitherto contrived never to succeed in any undertaking. He considered himself the victim of unprecedented ill fortune, forgetting that he had himself been his own evil genius. His son could hardly be otherwise than a chip of the old block. Now he turned away from the taffrail with a scowl; and, vowing that he would not be mewed up while "the governor" was enjoying himself, presently hailed a boat and went ashore, leaving his sisters to walk up and down the deck and long for the land.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING AN INCUBUS.

Andy carried his wrath at the Captain's company so far as to shake his fist close to that gentleman's bland and courteous back, while he bent forward from his thwart in speaking to Mr. Holt; which gestures of enmity highly amused the Canadian boatmen, as they grinned and jabbered in *patois* (old as the time of Henri Quatre) among themselves.

"The deludherer!" muttered Andy. "He'd coax a bird off a three wid his silver tongue. An' he must come betune my own gintlemen an' their frind—the old schamer!" Here a tremendous blow was lodged (in pantomime) under the Captain's ribs. "Sure, of coorse, they can't be up to his thricks, an' he an ould sojer!" And here Andy let fly vivaciously beneath his unconscious adversary's left ear, restraining the knuckles within about half-an-inch of his throat.

"Are you speaking to me, my good man?" said the Captain, suddenly wheeling round upon Andy, who sat face to his back.

"Is it me, yer honour?" and the dolorous submissiveness of Andy's countenance was a change marvellous to behold. "What could the likes of me have to say to the likes of you, sir?"

Arthur Wynn's gravity was fairly overcome, and he got a heavy fit of coughing in his pocket-handkerchief. Captain Armytage gazed keenly at Andy for a moment, during which he might as well have stared at a plaster bust, for all the discoveries he made in the passive simple countenance.

"Six hours' knapsack drill might do that fellow some good," said the officer, resuming his former position and the thread of conversation together. "In answer to your inquiry, Mr. Holt, I have not quite decided whether to settle in Upper or Lower Canada."

"Then, sir, you must know very little of either," was the blunt reply. "There's no more comparison between them than between settling in Normandy and in North Britain."

"Can't say I should like either location," rejoined the Captain, with his brilliant smile. "But I've been here with the regiment, and am not quite without personal experience. The life of a seigneur would just suit me; if I could find an eligible seignory for sale——"

Hiram Holt stared. A man who had come out with his family in an emigrant vessel, talking of purchasing a seignory! But this was a magnificent manner of the Captain's. Sixpence in his pocket assumed the dimensions of a sovereign in his imagination.

"Some of them are thirty thousand acres in extent," Mr. Holt remarked drily.

"Ah, yes, quite a little principality: one should enjoy all the old feudal feelings, walking about among one's subject *censitaires*, taking a paternal interest in their concerns, as well as bound to them by pecuniary ties. I should build a castellated baronial residence, pepper-box turrets, etcetera, and resist modern new lights to the uttermost."

"As soon a living man chained to a dead man, as *I* would hamper myself with that old-world feudality!" exclaimed the western pioneer. "Why, sir, can you have seen the wretched worn-out land they scratch with a wretched plough, fall after fall, without dreaming of rotation of crops, or drainage, or any other improvement? Do you remember the endless strips of long narrow fields edging the road, opening out of one another, in miserable divisions of one or two acres, perhaps, just affording starvation to the holders? What is the reason that where vast quantities of wheat were formerly exported, the soil now grows hardly enough for the people to eat? Sir, the country is cut up and subdivided to the last limits that will support even the sleepy life of a *habitan;* all improvement of every kind is barred; the French population stand still in the midst of our go-ahead age: and you would prolong the system that causes this!"

It was one of the few subjects upon which Mr. Holt got excited; but he had seen the evils of feudalism in the strong light of western progress. Captain Armytage, for peace' sake, qualified his lately expressed admiration, but was met again by a torrent of words—to the unalloyed delight of Andy, who was utterly unable to comprehend the argument, but only hoped "the schamer was gettin' more than he bargained for."

"Pauperism will be the result, sir; the race is incorrigible in its stupid determination to do as its forefathers did, and nothing else. Lower Canada wants a clearing out, like what you are getting in Ireland, before a healthy regeneration can set in. The religion is faulty; the habits and traditions of the race are faulty; Jean Baptiste is the drone in our colonial hive. He won't gather honey: he will just live, indolently drawling through an existence diversified by feast and fast days; and all his social vices flourish in shelter of this seignorial system—this—-this upas-tree which England is pledged to perpetuate:" and Mr. Holt struck his hand violently on the gunwale of the boat, awakening a responsive grin of triumph from Andy.

The Captain was spared a reply by the boat just then touching the wharf; and while they are landing, and lodging the luggage in Pat M'Donagh's house till the starting of the Montreal boat next afternoon, we may say a few words concerning the feudal system extant in Lower Canada, at the period when this story begins.

Henri Quatre was the monarch under whose sway the colony was originated. Champlain and De Levi knew no better than to reproduce the landed organization of France, with its most objectionable feature of the forced partition of estates, in the trans-Atlantic province, for defensive purposes, against the numerous and powerful Indian tribes. Military tenure was superadded Every farmer was perforce also a soldier, liable at any time to be called away from his husbandry to fight against the savage Iroquois or the aggressive British. Long after these combative days had passed away the military tenure remained, with its laws of serfdom, a canker at the roots of property; and thinking men dreaded to touch a matter so inwound with the very foundations of the social fabric in Lower Canada. But in 1854 and 1859 legislative acts were passed which have finally abolished the obnoxious tenure; each landholder, receiving his estate in freehold, has paid a certain sum, and the province in general contributed 650,000*l.*, as indemnity to those whose old established rights were surrendered for the public weal. Eight millions of inhabited acres were freed from the incubus, and Lower Canada has removed one great obstacle in the way of her prosperity.

At the period when Hiram Holt expressed himself so strongly on the subject, a grinding vassalage repressed the industry of the *habitans.* Though their annual rent, as *censitaires* or tenants, was not large, a variety of burdensome obligations was attached. When a man sold his tenure, the seigneur could demand a fine, sometimes one-twelfth of the purchase-money; heavy duties were charged on successions. The ties of the Roman Catholic Church were oppressive. Various monopolies were possessed by the seigneurs. The whole system of social government was a reproduction, in the nineteenth century, of the France of the fifteenth.

Mr. Holt was somewhat cooled when his party had reached the citadel, through streets so steep that the drive to their summit seemed a feat of horsemanship. Here was the great rock whence Jacques Cartier, first of European eyes, viewed the mighty river in the time of our Henry VIII., now bristling with fortifications which branch away in angles round the Upper Town, crowned with a battery of thirty-two pounders, whose black muzzles command the peaceful shipping below. Robert Wynn could not help remarking on that peculiarly Canadian charm, the exquisite clearness of the air, which brought distant objects so near in vision that he could hardly believe Point Levi to be a mile across the water, and the woods of the Isle of Orleans more than a league to the eastward.

Captain Armytage had many reminiscences of the fortress, but enjoyed little satisfaction in the relating of any; for nothing could get the seignorial tenure out of Mr. Holt's head, and he drove in sentences concerning it continually.

Outside the castle gates the Captain remembered important business, which must preclude him from the pleasure of accompanying his friends to Wolfe's Landing.

"Well, sir, I hope you now acknowledge that the seignorial system is a blot on our civilization."

"I wish it had never been invented!" exclaimed the Captain, very sincerely. And, with the gracefullest of bows, he got quit of Mr. Holt and his pet aversion together.

Hiram's features relaxed into a smile. "I knew I could convince him; he appears an agreeable companion," remarked Mr. Holt, somewhat simply. But the subject had given the key-note to the day; and in driving along the road to Cape Rouge, parallel with the St. Lawrence, he was finding confirmations for his opinion in most things they met and passed. The swarming country, and minute subdivisions of land, vexed Hiram's spirit. Not until they entered the precincts of the battle-field, and he was absorbed in pointing out the spots of peculiar interest, did the feudality of the province cease to trouble him.

All along the river was bordered by handsome villas and pleasure-grounds of Quebec merchants. Cultivation has gradually crept upon the battle-field, obliterating landmarks of the strife. The rock at the base of which Wolfe expired has been removed, and in its stead rises a pillar crowned with a bronze helmet and sword, and is inscribed:

HERE DIED WOLFE, VICTORIOUS.

Not till seventy-five years after the deed which makes his fame was this memorial erected: a tardy recognition of the service which placed the noblest of our dependencies—a province large as an old-world empire—in British hands.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVER HIGHWAY.

"WELL, Misther Robert! if ever I laid my eyes on the likes of such a ship, in all my born days!"

With this impressive ejaculation, Andy Callaghan backed on the wharf to take a completer view of the wondrous whole. His untravelled imagination had hitherto pictured steamers after the one pattern and similitude of those which sailed upon the river Lee and in the Cove of Cork—craft which had the aquatic appendages of masts and decks, and still kept up an exterior relation with the ship tribe. But this a steamboat! this great three-storied wooden edifice, massive looking as a terrace of houses!

"An' a hole in the side for a hall-door!" soliloquized Andy. "No, but two holes, one for the quality an' the other for the commonality. An' no deck at all at all for the people to take the air, only all cabins intirely! If it isn't the very dead image of a side of a sthreet swimmin' away!"

Andy's outspoken remarks attracted some notice when he was fairly aboard.

"This is the fore-cabin, and you must try to keep quiet," said Arthur. "We'll be off presently; and whatever you do," he added in a low tone, "keep clear of that bar"—indicating a counter recess where liquors were sold, and where customers had congregated already.

"Never fear, sir," was the reply; "though they've no right to put it there forenent us, an' they knowin' that the bare sight of it is like fire to tow with many a one. But sure they're not thinkin' only how to get money:" and Mr. Callaghan ended his moral reflections by sitting down beside a family of small children, who squalled in different keys, and treating one of them to a ride on his foot, which favour, being distributed impartially, presently restored good humour.

"An' isn't there any peep of the fresh air allowed us at all?" inquired Andy of a man near him, whose peculiar cut of garments had already excited his curiosity. "It's a quare vessel that hasn't aither a sail or deck: we might all go to the bottom of the say in this big box, 'athout bein' a bit the wiser."

The emigrant with the six children looked rather anxious, and hugged her baby closer, poor woman; glancing for a minute at the bar, where her husband was sipping gin, and already brawling with an American. But as the apple-complexioned man whom Andy addressed happened to be a French *habitan*, limited in English at the best of times, the Irish brogue puzzled him so thoroughly, that he could only make a polite bow, and signify his ignorance of Monsieur's meaning.

"Maybe he's an Injin," thought Andy; "but sure I thought thim savages wore no clothes, and he has an iligant blue coat an' red tie. I wondher would it be any good to thry the Irish wid him;" and, as an experiment, he said something in the richest Munster dialect. The Canadian's politeness was almost forgotten in his stare of surprise, and he took the earliest opportunity of changing his place, and viewing Andy respectfully from afar.

But if it had a repellant effect on the *habitan*, it exerted a strong attractive force upon other of the passengers. Mr. Callaghan was never happier than when at the focus of a knot of his countrymen, for his talents were essentially social; and before the evening was over, his musical feats with voice and violin had so charmed the aforesaid Canadian, that he came up and made him another of the polite bows

"Very much obliged to you, sir, if I only knew what you were sayin'," replied Andy, with equal courtesy.

"He's inviting you to his daughter's wedding," interpreted one of the sailors who stood by; "you and the fiddle."

"With all the pleasure in life, sir," promptly replied Andy, as he imitated the bow of the worthy *habitan* to perfection. "I'm always ready for any fun-goin'. Ask the old gentleman when and where it's to be," he continued, jogging the interpreter with his elbow.

"The day after to-morrow, at a village near Montreal;" upon learning which, Andy's countenance fell, and the festive vision faded from his ken. "Maybe it's in China I'd be by that time," said he, with incorrect notions of geography; "but I'm obliged to you all the same, sir, an' wherever I am I'll drink her health, if 'twas only in a glass of wather. I'll have a pain in me back if I bow much longer," added Andy, *sotto voce;* "I don't know how he's able to keep it up at all."

"Why, where are you going to?" asked the sailor, laughing; "this ain't the way to China by a long chalk."

"Going to make me fortune," replied Andy, boldly, as he dropped the violin into its case and latched the cover tightly, as if a secret were locked in. While no more idea had he of his destination, nor plan for future life, poor faithful peasant, than the fine Newfoundland dog which slept not far from him that night in the fore-cabin, a mass of creamy curls.

Meanwhile, all the evening, and all the night through, the noble steamer stemmed the broad brimming flood, steadily onwards, casting behind her on the moonlit air a breath of dark smoke ruddy with sparks, at every palpitation of her mighty engine-heart. Past black pine forests to the edge of the shore; past knots of white cottages centred round the usual gleaming metal spire; past confluence of other rivers, dark paths joining the great continental highway; blowing off steam now and then at young roadside towns, where, upon wooden wharves, waited passengers and freight in the moonlight, swallowing into either mouth all presented to her, and on untiringly again. Robert Wynn stayed on the small open poop astern, gazing at the picturesque panorama, half revealed, half shaded by the silvery beams, long after the major part of the passengers were snug in their state-rooms or berths below. With the urging of the fire-driven machinery he could hear mingled the vast moan of the river sweeping along eastwards. It saddened him, that never-silent voice of "the Father of Waters." Memories of home came thronging round him—a home for him extinct, dead, till in this distant land he should create another. At the threshold of a great undertaking, before hand has been put to work it out, the heart always shrinks and shivers, as did his here. Looking upon the length and breadth of all that had to be done, it seemed too hard for him.

But not so when next morning he arose from a few hours' sleep, and beheld the bright sunshine lighting up the glorious Canadian world. Looming giants by moonlight are reduced to very ordinary obstacles by daylight; and the set of desponding thoughts which had weighed upon the young man as he contemplated the inky river and darkling country, seemed now to belong to another phase of being. Despondent! with the wide free world to work in, and its best prizes lying beside the goal, ready for capture by the steady heart and active hand. Robert felt almost as if that shadowy home in the forest were already built, already peopled with the dear old faces he had left behind. The pure fresh air—clear as is rarely breathed in Europe, (for it is as if in our old world the breath of unnumbered nations has for centuries been soiling the elements)—the richly coloured scene, were a cordial to his young brain. The steamer was fast approaching the Isle of St. Helen's; and beyond, against a background of purple mountain, lay "the Silver Town," radiant with that surface glitter peculiar to Canadian cities of the Lower Province; as if Montreal had sent her chief edifices to be electro-plated, and they had just come home brightly burnished. In front was the shining blue current of the St. Lawrence, escaped from a bewildering perplexity of islets and rapids, which had apparently ruffled its temper not a little.

"Part of our Ottawa flows here," said Mr. Holt, glancing at the stream with a sort of home affection—"our clear emerald Ottawa, fresh from the virgin wilderness; and it hasn't quite mingled with its muddy neighbour yet, no more than we westerns can comfortably mingle with the *habitans* and their old-world practices down here. You see, Wynn, the St. Lawrence has been running over a bed of marl for miles before it reaches Lake St. Louis; and the Ottawa has been purified by plenty of rocks and rapids; so they don't suit very well—no more than we and the *habitans*—ha! ha!" Mr. Holt was vastly amused by the similitude. He pointed to a very distinctly marked line of foam wavering on the river surface, and said, "There's the demarcation."

"I am glad it is of such an evanescent nature, sir," replied Robert. He might have said how much grander the river became when all brawling was forgotten, and both currents fused into one glorious stream.

"Now," said Arthur, with the contrariety of youth (and *aside*, as is written in stage-plays), "I'm certain these French Canadians are not so black as they're painted. I like those sociable white villages round the tin spires; and the guide-book says the people are amiable and civil. I'll investigate that subject, Bob."

"I would advise you to investigate breakfast just now," was the reply, as the steward's bell swung forth its summons. Then commenced a procession of passengers to the eating-room; through the length of the sumptuously furnished saloon, where the richest Persian carpets, marble tables, brilliant chandeliers and mirrors, were at the service of the public; by a narrow staircase amidships down to the lowest story of the vessel, a long apartment lit by candles, and lined at the sides with curtained rows of berths. The usual pause followed for the advent of the ladies: nobody sat down till they had come from their cabin on the middle deck, and established themselves wheresoever they listed.

"That's like Irish politeness," whispered Arthur, whose good spirits were always talkative. "My father, dear old gentleman, would take off his hat to a petticoat on a bush, I do believe."

The company was very mixed, and quite as much conversation went on in French as in English. It seemed to the strangers as if the balance of gentlemanly deportment, and yet vivacity of manner, might possibly lie on the side of those who spoke the former tongue. Next to Arthur sat the sallow States'-man, bolting his breakfast with unconscionable speed, and between whiles, in a high treble voice, volunteering his opinion pretty freely on Canadian matters, as if he were endowed with a special commission to set them right. Badly as Hiram Holt thought of the seignorial system, he was perforce driven to defend it in some measure, much to Arthur's delectation; but he soon discovered that to carry war into the enemy's country was his best policy, so he seized the institution of slavery in his canine teeth, and worried it well. The States'-man thought that a gentleman might be permitted to travel without being subject to attacks on his country: Mr. Holt observed that he thought precisely the same, which species of agreement closed the conversation. And the States'-man relieved his feelings subsequently by whittling a stick from the firewood into impalpable chips, with his heels resting on the apex of the saloon stove. Kind-hearted Hiram Holt had meanwhile more than half repented his hostility.

"Tell you what, sir," said he, going up and extending his hand, "it wasn't the matter, but the manner of your talk that raised my dander a while since. I agree in most of what you say about this province here, and I hope as much as you do that the last badge of feudalism may soon be swept away."

The American put his bony pale hand almost sullenly into the

Canadian's brawny palm, and after suffering the pressure, returned to his interesting pursuit of whittling, which he continued in silence for the rest of the voyage.

CHAPTER VIII.

"JEAN BAPTISTE" AT HOME.

After seeing most of the thoroughfares of Montreal, and receiving the set of sensations experienced by all new comers and recorded in all books of Canadian travel—principally wondering at the incongruities of French and English nationality grafted together, and coherent as the segments of the fabled centaur—the active commerce of a British port carried on beneath the shadow of walled-in convents suggesting Belgium—friars endued with long black robes, passing soldiers clothed in the immemorial scarlet—a Rue Notre Dame and a St. James's Street in neighbourhood—the brothers witnessed another phase of American life as they dined at a monster table-d'hôte in the largest hotel of the city. The imperial system of inn-keeping originated in the United States has been imported across the border, much to the advantage of British subjects; and nothing can be a queerer contrast than the Englishman's solitary dinner in a London coffee room, and his part in the vast collective meals of a trans-Atlantic hotel.

"New to this sort of thing, I should imagine?" said the gentleman next beside Robert, in a particularly thin, wiry voice.

"Yes, quite a stranger," answered Robert, looking round, and seeing that the speaker was a person with a sharp nose and small keen black eyes.

"So I thought; your looks betray it. Everything seems queer, I guess. Intending to be a settler, eh?" Then, without waiting for an answer, "That's right: I always welcome the infusion of young blood into our colony, particularly *gentle* blood; for we are a rough set, mister, and want polish—and—and—all that."

These deferential words, uttered in the deferential manner of inferiority to acknowledged excellence, certainly pleased Robert; for what heart is unsusceptible to subtle flattery? And of all modes of influence men are most easily flattered or disparaged by reference to what is no worthiness or fault of their own—the social station in which it has pleased the Creator that they should enter this world. The keen brain behind the keen eyes knew this well; the fact had oiled a way for his wedge many a time. What was his motive for endeavouring to ingratiate himself with young Wynn for the next twenty minutes?

"Now, mister, if it's a fact that you be settling, I can give you a chance of some of the finest lots of land ever offered for sale in Montcalm township. A friend of mine has a beautiful farm there that would just suit you; best part cleared and under fence—fine water privilege—land in good heart, and going, I may say, dirt cheap."

Robert felt much obliged for the interest in his welfare which prompted this eligible offer. "But unfortunately I have very little money to invest," said he carelessly. The swift penetrating glance that followed from his companion was unseen, as he crumbled his biscuit on the table-cloth. "I am rather disposed to try the backwoods," he added.

"The bush!" in accents of amazement. "The bush! it may do very well for labourers, but for a gentleman of your pretensions, it would be misery—wholly unsuitable, sir—wholly unsuitable. No, no, take my advice, and settle where the advantages of civilization—the comforts of life to which you have been accustomed—are accessible. A few thousand dollars——"

"I regret to say," Robert interposed, "that even one thousand is immensely more than I possess," turning to the Canadian with a frank smile, which was by no means reduplicated in the sharp face

And from the era of that revelation, conversation unaccountably flagged.

"Do you know to whom you talked at table?" asked Hiram Holt, afterwards. He had been sitting some way further up at the other side. "One of the most noted land-jobbers in the country—a man who buys wild lands at three shillings an acre, to sell them again at ten or fifteen, if he can; and he never loses an opportunity of driving a trade. His bargain of a cleared farm is probably some worn out dilapidated location not worth half-a-dollar an acre till hundreds have been spent on it."

"Then I've gained one benefit by being poor," said Robert; "nobody can have a motive for over-reaching me"—which was philosophic consolation.

Mr. Holt's business would not permit him to leave till next evening. And so the Wynns, continuing to lionize, looked into the vast but dreary Romish cathedral, which seats ten thousand people in its nine spacious aisles and seven chapels; clambered to the roof, and viewed the city from a promenade at an elevation of 120 feet; and then drove to that special beauty of Montreal—the mountain. This is a hill more than 500 feet in height, and clothed from head to foot with the richest verdure of woods; among which grow the most delicious apples extant since Paris selected one as a prize. From the summit a landscape of level country stretches below westwards; in middle, distant villages; on the horizon, the Ottawa confluence, bounding Montreal Island and forming others. Southwards, across the St. Lawrence, the hills of Vermont far away; nearer, the fertile valley of the Richelieu.

"Let's go off to one of the *habitan* villages," said Arthur, suddenly. "Dismiss the calêche, and we will walk back. I'll ask for a drink of water in one of the cottages just to scrape acquaintance."

"Furbish up your French, too," said Robert, "for they do gabble it fast. I heard a fellow chattering in the steerage, coming up the river yesterday morning: by the way, he and Andy had struck up a friendship; and such bowing as they had to each other's incomprehensible lingo!"

"I wonder what he is doing to-day," said Arthur, reflectively: "he asked me so particularly whether we should want him again till the evening."

"Found out a nest of Irish somewhere, I suppose."

"There's a fellow taking off his hat to us," remarked Arthur, as they passed a carter. "Everybody seems to bow to everybody in this country. But did you ever see such an old-fashioned vehicle as he drives? And he keeps talking to himself and his horse all the way, apparently."

Rapidly walking down the fine road to the plain, they were not long in nearing a group of neat white houses round the invariable shining steeple.

"The village looks as sociable as the people," said Robert. "How neat everything seems!—Hallo, Arthur, we've come in for some festivity or other, by all the gay ribbons about."

"Bon jour, Madame," said Arthur, boldly, to a tidy old lady, sitting in her green verandah. "Nous sommes des etrangers—I'd like to ask her what it's all about," he whispered confidentially to Robert; but I'm out of my depth already."

The aged *Canadienne* arose, with the politeness so natural to her Gallic descent, and bade them welcome. But sounds issuing from the opposite house rivetted their attention. "As sure as I'm here, that's Andy's violin," exclaimed Arthur; "I'd know his scrape anywhere;" and he crossed the road in a moment.

Without doubt Andy was the player, ay, and the performer too; for he was dancing a species of quick-step solo, surrounded by a circle of grinning and delighted *habitans*. The most perfect gravity dwelt in his own countenance, meanwhile, alloyed by just a spice of lurking fun in his deep-set eyes. Which altogether faded, as a candle blown out, when suddenly he perceived the accession to the company. Silence succeeded the dead blank on his features, down hung the violin and its bow on either side, and the corners of his mouth sunk into a dismal curve.

"Go on, old boy—scrape away," shouted Arthur, hilariously. "So many pretty faces would inspire anybody:" and whether it was that the black-eyed Canadian damsels felt the compliment through the foreign idiom, there was considerable blushing and bridling as the speaker's glance travelled round the group.

They deserved his encomium. The slight sprightly type of dark beauty abounded; and so prettily decked out with bright ribbons and flowers, that it was evident the tastefulness which renders French modistes unrivalled had not died out in these collateral relatives of the nation. Forward stepped Monsieur, the master of the house and father of the bride, begging that Messieurs would be so benevolent as to seat themselves, and would honour him by partaking of refreshment; both which requests Messieurs were nothing loth to fulfil. It was hardly to be realized that these were the besotted *habitans*, the unimprovable race, the blotch on the fair face of Canadian civilization; these happy-looking, simple-minded people: Hiram Holt was a slanderer. Full an hour passed before the Wynns could get away from the embarrassing hospitalities and politeness of the good villagers, who shook hands all round at parting, in most affectionate style. As for Andy, much to his own discomfort, he was kissed by his host.

"Now I could ondherstand if it was the missus that shaluted me," said he, rubbing across his cheek with his cuff as soon as he was on the road; "throth an' they're all very fond of me intirely, considherin' they never laid eyes on me till this mornin', barrin' himself. An' I never see nater houses—they're as clane as a gintleman's; you might ate off the flure. If only the people wud forget that quare talk they have, an' spake like Christhens, that a body could know what they're sayin', 'twould be a dale mor comfortable."

"And how could you get on without understanding them?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, 'twas aisy enough sometimes; for whin they wanted me to come to dinner they had only to show me the table; and whin they wanted me to play, they only rubbed across their arm this way, and said, 'jawer, jawer:' (I brought away that word, anyhow," added Mr. Callaghan, with great satisfaction). "All other times they spake to me I bowed plinty, an' that did the business. But there was a man alongside me at the dinner, that had a few words of English; an' he tould me that this time of the year they all marries, to be ready against the winter. I likes that fashion, Misther Robert;" and herewith Andy heaved a little sigh, thinking perhaps of a certain pretty blue-eyed Mary in Ireland.

"Put your best foot foremost, Callaghan," said Mr. Wynn: "we shall scarcely reach town in time;" and all three quickened their pace.

"I'll never believe a syllable against the *habitans* again," said Arthur. "Their old-fashioned politeness is a perfect relief from the bluff manners of most other Canadians. They seem to me to have a lot of virtues—cleanliness, good-humour, good-nature—and I like their habit of living all together, children settled round the parent tree like branches of a banyan. We would give a trifle to be able to do it ourselves, Bob:" and the smile with which the brothers met each other's eyes was rather wistful.

CHAPTER IX.

"FROM MUD TO MARBLE.'

Hiram Holt was proud of his ancestry. Not that he had sixteen quarterings whereof to boast, or even six; his pedigree could have blazoned an escutcheon only with spade, and shuttle, and saw, back for generations. But then, society all about him was in like plight; and it is a strong consolation, in this as in matters moral, to be no worse than one's neighbours. Truly, a Herald's College would find Canada a very jungle as to genealogy. The man of marble has had a grandfather of mud, as was the case with the owner of Maple Grove.

And, instead of resenting such origin as an injury received from his progenitors, worthy Hiram looked back from the comfortable eminence of prosperity whereunto he had attained, and loved to retrace the gradual steps of labour which led thither. He could remember most of them; to his memory's eye the virgin forest stretched for unknown and unnumbered miles west and northward of the settler's adventurous clearing, and the rude log shanty was his home beside the sombre pines. Now the pines were dead and gone, except a few isolated giants standing gloomily among the maple plantations; but the backwoodsman's shanty had outlived all subsequent changes.

Here, in the wide courtyard to the rear of Mr. Holt's house it was preserved, like a curious thing set apart in a museum—an embodiment of the old struggling days embalmed. The walls of great unhewn logs fastened at the corners by notching; the crevices chinked up with chips and clay; the single rude square window shuttered across; the roof of basswood troughs, all blackened with age; the rough door, creaking on clumsy wooden hinges when Mr. Holt unlocked it—these were not encouraging features, viewed by the light of a future personal experience. Robert stole a glance at Arthur as they stepped inside the low dark shed, and, as Arthur had with similar motives also stolen a glance at Robert, their eyes naturally met, and both laughed.

They had been thinking a twin thought—"How will my brother like such quarters as this in the forest?"

"A queer concern," remarked Arthur, in a low voice, and rubbing his chin.

"Rather!" replied Robert, looking equally dubious.

"I like to show the shanty to youngsters," said Mr. Holt, as he turned from pushing back the shutter, "that they may see what they have to expect. From such a start as this we Canadians have all waked up into opulence—that is, the hardworking share of us; and there's room enough for tens of thousands to do the same off in the bush."

"I hope so, sir," was the least desponding remark of which Robert could think. For the naked reality of a forest life came before him as never previously. The halo of distance had faded, as he stood beside the rude fireplace, fashioned of four upright limestone slabs in a corner, reaching to a hole in the roof, down which the wind was howling just now. It was rather a bleak look out, notwithstanding the honeyed promises of the old settler pouring on his ear.

"To be sure there is. Fortune's at your back in the bush; and you haven't, as in the mother country, to rise by pushing others down. There's no impassable gulf separating you from anything you choose to aim at. It strikes me that the motto of our capital is as good as a piece of advice to the settler—'Industry, Intelligence, and Integrity'—with a beaver as pattern of the two first principles, anyhow. So recollect the beaver, my young chaps, and work like it.

"I don't remember the building of this," he added; "but every stick was laid by my father's own hands, and my mother chinked between them till all was tight and right. I tell you I'm prouder of it than of a piece of fancywork, such as I've seen framed and glazed. I love every log in the old timbers." And Mr. Holt tapped the wall affectionately with his walking-staff. "It was the furthest west clearing then, and my father chose the site because of the spring yonder, which is covered with a stone and civilized into a well now-a-days."

"And is the town so modern as all that comes to?" said Robert.

"Twenty years grows a city in Canada," replied Mr. Holt, somewhat loftily. "Twenty years between the swamp and the crowded street: while two inches of ivy would be growing round a European ruin, we turn a wilderness into a cultivated country, dotted with villages. The history of Mapleton is easily told. My father was the first who ever built a sawmill on the river down there, and the frame-houses began to gather about it shortly. Then he ventured into the grist line; and I'm the owner of the biggest mills in the place now, with half-a-dozen of others competing, and all doing a fair business in flour, and lumber for exportation. You see in this land we've room enough for all, and no man need scowl down another of the same trade. 'Taint so in England, where you must knock your bread out of somebody else's mouth."

"Not always, sir," said Robert, "nor commonly, I hope."

"I forgot you were a fresh importation," observed Mr. Holt, with a satisfied chuckle. "You ain't colonized yet. Well, let's come and look at something else."

Meanwhile Arthur had measured the dimensions of the shanty, by pacing along and across: sixteen feet one way, twelve the other. Narrow limits for the in-door life of a family; but the cottage had somewhat grown with their growth, and thrown out a couple of small bed-chambers, like buds of incipient shanties, from the main trunk. A curiosity of woodcraft it looked, so mossy, gnarled, and weather-beaten, that one could easily have believed it had sprung from the ground without the intervention of hands, a specimen of some gigantic forest fungus.

"I'll leave a charge in my will that it's not to be disturbed," said Hiram. "'Twould be sacrilege to move a log of the whole consarn. D'ye hear, Sam?"

His son had just come up and shaken hands; for this was a matutinal expedition of Mr. Holt and his guests round the farm. Being given to habits of extreme earliness, the former was wont to rouse any one in the house whose company he fancied, to go with him in his morning walks; and the Wynns had been honoured by a knocking-up at five o'clock for that purpose. Mr. Holt had strode into their room, flung open the window shutters and the sash with a resounding hand which completely dissipated sleep, and rendered it hardly matter of choice to follow him, since no repose was to be gained by lying in bed. Sam's clear brown eyes sparkled as he saw the victims promenading after his tall father at the Gothic hour of six, and marked Arthur furtively rubbing his eyes.

"You're tremendously early people here," remarked Arthur, when young Holt joined them. "I had a mind to turn round and close the shutters again, but was afraid I might affront your father."

"Affront him! oh no; but he'd just come again and again to rouse you, till you were compelled to submit in self-defence. He wakes up young people on principle, he says."

"Well, he practises his precepts," rejoined Arthur, "and seems to have trained his children in the same."

"Yes, he has made us all practical men; seven chips of the old block," observed Sam.

"Seven brothers!" ejaculated Arthur. "I saw only three last night. And are they all as tall as you?"

"About forty-four feet of length among us," said Sam. "We're a long family in more ways than one;" and he looked down from his altitude of seventy-five inches on the young Irishman.

"It is quite a pleasant surprise to see your sister," Arthur remarked.

"Bell hasn't kept up the family tradition of height, I must say. She's a degenerate specimen of the Holts;" and the speaker's brown eyes softened with a beam of fondness; "for which reason, I suppose, she'll not bear the name long."

"And who's the lucky man?" asked Arthur, feeling an instant's disagreeable surprise, and blushing at the sensation.

"Oh, out of half-a-dozen pretenders, 'twould be hard to say. We all marry early in Canada: most of my contemporaries are

Benedicts long ago. Three brothers younger than I have wives and children, and are settled in farms and mills of their own."

"And might I ask——?" began Arthur, hesitating when the very personal nature of the inquiry struck him.

"To be sure you might. Well, in the first place, I took a fancy to go through college, and my father left me in Toronto for four years at the University of Upper Canada. That brought me up to twenty-three years old; and then—for the last two years nobody would have me," added Sam, elevating his black brows.

"Perhaps you are too fastidious; I remark that about men who have nice sisters," said Mr. Arthur, with an air of much experience: "now, Robert and I never see anybody so nice as Linda—at least, hardly ever."

"A saving clause for Bell," said her brother, laughing, "which is polite, at all events. I must tell her there's a young lady at home that you prefer immensely."

Which he accordingly did, at the ensuing breakfast; and pretty Miss Holt pretended to take the matter greatly to heart, and would not permit Arthur to explain; while mischievous Sam scouted the notion of the unknown "Linda" being his sister, except by the rather distant tie of Adam and Eve.

What a plentiful table was this at Maple Grove! Several sorts of meat and wild fowl, several species of bread and cake, several indigenous preserves; and Robert could not help going back with aching heart to the scant supply of meagre fare at home; he saw again his sweet pale mother trying to look cheerful over the poor meal, and Linda keeping up an artificial gaiety, while her soul was sick of stints and privations. His face grew stern and sad at the memory; enjoyment or amusement was criminal for him while they were suffering. So when, by-and-by, Mr. Holt invited him and Arthur to remain for the winter months at Maple Grove, with a view of gaining insight of Canadian manners and Canadian farming, he decidedly declined. He wished to push on at once; whatever hardships lay before them, had better be combated as soon as possible. A lengthened stay here would be a bad preparation for the wilderness life; they could scarcely but be enervated by it.

"You're a brave lad," said Mr. Holt, "and I admire your pluck, though you are plunging right into a pack of troubles; but the overcoming of each one will be a step in the ladder to fortune. Now I'll go and get out the horses, and ride you over to Mr. Landenstein's office: he'll know all about the wild lands, and perhaps has a cleared farm or two cheap."

But unfortunately such farms did not suit Robert's pocket. One of two hundred acres, fifty cleared and the rest bush, was offered for 240*l*., with a wooden house thrown into the bargain; but the purchaser's fancy for the forest was unconquerable: it puzzled even Mr. Holt. He returned from Mapleton the proprietor of a hundred acres of bush in a newly settled western township, and felt much the better and cheerier that his excursion had ended so. The future had something tangible for his grasp now; and he only grudged every hour spent away from his sphere of labour as an opportunity of advantage lost.

CHAPTER X.

CORDUROY.

"They wor very kind to us," observed Andy, from his elevation in the waggon; "an' this counthry bates all the world at 'ating and dhrinking."

This to Arthur Wynn, who was seated rather despondingly in front of the collection of boxes, pots, and pails, which formed their stock-in-trade for bush life. Sam Holt and Robert were walking on before the horse, a furlong a-head; but Arthur had dropped behind for meditation's sake, and taken up his residence on the waggon for awhile, with his cap drawn over his eyes. I dare say

Miss Bell had something to do with the foolish boy's regret for leaving Maple Grove.

"Every day was like a Christmas or an Aisther," continued Andy, who had no idea that any one could prefer silence to conversation; "an' the sarvints had parlour fare in the kitchen always, an' a supper that was like a dinner, just before goin' to bed. Throth, they had fine times of it—puddins an' pies, if you plaze: the bare lavins would feed a family at home. An' it's the same, they tell me, in all the farmers houses round about. I never thought to see so much vittles."

No reply could be elicited from Mr. Arthur Wynn but a grunt.

"Didn't you?" put in the driver, with a small sneer. Andy had deemed him too far distant to catch his words, as he walked beside his horse.

"Why, then, you've long ears, my man; but sure it's kind for ye," retorted Mr. Callaghan, his eye twinkling wickedly. I fear that his subtle irony was lost upon its subject. "Of coorse I'm not used to ye're foreign food. Our vittles at home are a dale dacenter, though not so common."

And Arthur, through his half-drowsy ears, was amused by the colloquy that ensued, in the course of which Andy completely floored the Canadian by a glowing description of Dunore, delivered in the present tense, but referring, alas! to a period of sixteen or twenty years previously. But the smart black-eyed backwoodsman wound up with the utterly incredulous speech:—

"They left all them riches, to come and settle in our bush! whew!" He jerked his whip resoundingly upon the fryingpan and tin kettle in the rear, which produced a noise so curiously illustrative of his argument, that Arthur laughed heartily, and shook off his fit of blues.

The aspect of Nature would have helped him to do that. The thousand dyes of the woods were brilliant as if the richest sunset had gushed from the heavens, and painted the earth with a permanent glory of colour. A drapery of crimson and gold endued the maples; the wild bines and briars were covered with orange and scarlet berries; the black-plumed pine trees rose solemnly behind. A flat country, for the most part; and, as the travellers slowly receded westward, settlements became sparse and small; the grand forests closed more densely round them; solitary clearings broke the monotony of trees.

The first of anything that one sees or experiences, remains stronger than all after impressions on the memory. With what interest did the embryo settlers regard the first veritable log-hut that presented itself, surrounded by half an acre of stumps, among which struggled potatoes and big yellow squashes. A dozen hens pecked about; a consumptive-looking cow suspended her chewing, as also did her master his hoeing, to gaze after the waggon, till it disappeared beyond the square frame of forest which shut in the little clearing.

Again the long lines of stately oaks and firs, with a straight and apparently endless road between them, like the examples of perspective in beginners' drawing books, but with the vanishing point always receding.

"I see they've turnpiked this road since I was on it before," observed the driver.

"Where?" asked Andy, looking about. "I don't see a turnpike —an' sure I ought to know a tollman's dirty face in any place. Sorra house here at all at all, or a gate; or a ha'porth except trees," he added, in a disgusted manner.

"There," said the Canadian, pointing to a ploughed line along each side of the road, whence the earth had been thrown up in the centre by a scraper; "that's turnpiking."

"Ye might have invented a new name," rejoined the Irishman, with an offended air, "an' not be mislading people. I thought it was one of the ould pike-gates where I used to have to pay fourpince for me, ass and car; an' throth, much as I hated it, I'd be a'most glad to see one of the sort here, just for company's sake. A mighty lonesome counthry ye have, to be sure!"

"Well, we can't be far from Greenock now; and I see a bit of a snake fence yonder."

It was another clearing, on a more enterprising scale than the last described; the forest had been pushed back further, and a good wooden house erected in the open space; zigzag rail fences inclosed a few fields almost clear of stumps, and an orchard was growing up behind. A man in a red shirt, who was engaged in underbrushing at a little distance, said that "the town" was only a mile away—Greenock, on the Clyde.

Alas for nomenclature! The waggon scrambled down a rather steep declivity, towards a dozen houses scattered beside a stream: stumps stood erect in the single short street, and a ferry-boat was the only craft enlivening the shore. A Greenock without commerce or warehouses, a Clyde without wharves or ships, or the possibility of either—what mere travestie effected by a name!

"A nest of Scottish emigrants, I suppose," said Robert Wynn, as he contemplated "the town."

"Yes, and they'll push their place up to something," replied Sam Holt: "if pluck and perseverance can do it, they will. Only one enemy can ruin a Scotchman here, and that's the 'drap drink.' Ten to one that in twenty years, you find this ground covered with factories and thousands of houses; that solitary store is the germ of streets of shops, and the tavern will expand into half a score hotels. Sandy will do it all."

"I'm afraid you could not speak so well of Irish progress."

"Because the canker of their religion continues to produce its legitimate effects in most cases; and the influence of whisky—the great bane of social life in our colony—is even more predominant than over the lower class Scotch settlers. Still, they do infinitely better here than at home; and you'll meet with many a flourishing Hibernian in the backwoods and pioneer cities."

"I presume this is a pioneer city?" looking round at the handful of wooden shanties.

"Don't despise it; Rome had as small a beginning, and was manned by no more indomitable hands and hearts than our frontier emigrants."

"We are producing quite a sensation," said Robert. For the major part of the inhabitants came out of doors to view the strangers, with that curiosity which characterizes a new-born society; many of the men bethought themselves of some business at the wooden tavern by the water-side, where the waggon drew up and the new arrivals entered in.

A store where everything was sold, from a nail or a spool of "slack," to a keg of spirits or an almanack: sold for money when it could be had, for flour or wool or potash when it couldn't; likewise a post-office, whither a stage came once a week with an odd passenger, or an odd dozen of newspapers and letters; likewise the abode of a magistrate, where justice was occasionally dispensed and marriages performed. The dwelling that united all these offices in its single person, was a long, low, framed house, roofed with shingles, and but one story in height; proprietor, a certain canny Scot, named Angus Macgregor, who having landed at Quebec with just forty shillings in the world, was making rapid strides to wealth here, as a landed proprietor and store-keeper without rivalry. Others of the clan Gregor had come out, allured by tidings of his prosperity; and so the broad Doric of Lowland Scotch resounded about the tavern table, almost as much as the Canadian twang.

All doing well. Labour was the sole commodity they possessed, and it sufficed to purchase the best things of life in Canada, especially that slow upward rising in circumstances and possessions, which is one of the sweetest sensations of struggling humanity, and which only a favoured few among the working classes can enjoy at home. Robert Wynn was almost as curious about their affairs as they were about his; for he was energized afresh by every instance of progress, and little inducement was required to draw from the settlers their own histories, which had the single monotony running through each, of gradual growth from poverty to prosperity.

"What sort of roads have you across the ferry to the Cedars?" inquired Sam Holt of mine host.

"The first part of the concession line is pretty good, but I canna say as much for the 'corduroy' afterwards: the riding's not so easy there, I guess."

"Corduroy!" ejaculated Arthur.

"Oh, wait till you feel it," said Sam, with much amusement in his eyes. "It's indescribable. I hope we won't meet it in the dark, that's all."

"Drivin' across ladders for ever, with the rungs very far apart," explained a Canadian to Andy, in the background, as the latter rubbed his finger-tips over the ribs in the material of his pantaloons, and looked puzzled.

"An' what description of vahicle stands sich thratement?" asked Mr. Callaghan, "an what description of baste?"

"Oxen is the handiest, 'cos they've the strongest legs," returned his informant, with a fresh puff of his pipe.

"Well, of all the counthries——" began Andy, for the twentieth time that day; and perhaps as many as ten additional utterances of the ejaculation were forced by the discovery that he and the gentlemen were to occupy the same sleeping apartment; but, above all, by the revelation that behind a ragged curtain in the corner reposed two wayfaring women, going to join their husbands in the woods, and having also a baby. The latter creature, not being at all overawed by its company, of course screamed in the night whenever the fancy seized it; and good-natured Andy found himself at one period actually walking up and down with the warm bundle of flannel in his arms, patting it on the back soothingly.

Next morning they left the little settlement, and, crossing the ferry again plunged into the primeval forest. Robert felt as if that mock Clyde were the Rubicon of their fate.

"I leave the old degenerate life," he murmured to himself, "with all its traditions of ease. I go forth to face Fortune in these wilds, and to win her, if ever sturdy toil of limb and brain succeeded."

This spirit of independence was manly, but Robert did not at the moment join to it the nobler spirit of dependence on the Divine Disposer of events: self-trust filled his heart; and this is the great snare of youth.

"You are looking unusually valorous," said Sam Holt, who marched alongside. He had volunteered to stay with them for their first fortnight of bush life, like a kind fellow as he was. Something about these young Wynns had attracted his regard, and perhaps a touch of compassion. He would, at least, help them to put up the shanty, he said.

And truly the road grew very bad; at a short bit of swamp they made their first acquaintance with "corduroy." Sam explained the structure when the waggon had done bumping over it: trunks of trees had been laid along the road as "sleepers" in three continuous lines; and across them round logs, close together by theory, but in practice perhaps a foot or two apart, with unknown abysses of mud between.

They wished even for the corduroy expedient a little further on, when the line became encumbered with stumps left from the underbrushing, and which caught in the axletree every few score yards. Now came the handspikes into action, which provident Sam had cut, and laid into the waggon when the road was fair and smooth; for the wheels had to be lifted high enough to slip over the obstacles. In the pauses of manual labour came the chilling thought, "All this difficulty between us and home."

Sunlight faded from the tree tops; and soon night was descending darkly among the pines.

'We must either camp in the woods, or get shelter at some settler's," decided Sam. "We'll try a quarter of a mile further, and see what it brings." So away they went again, shouting at the oxen, and endeavouring to steer the equipage free of mud-holes and stumps.

"I am afraid our cups and saucers are all in a smash," said Arthur. Robert had a secret misgiving to the same effect; but, then, crockeryware is a luxury to which no shanty-man has a right. Andy rescued a washing basin and ewer, by wearing the former on his head and the latter on his left arm—helmet and shield-wise; except at intervals, when he took his turn at handspiking.

A light gleamed through the trees, and a dog barked simultaneously: they were on the verge of a clearing; and, hearing the voices outside, the owner of the house came forth to welcome the travellers, with a heartiness widely different from the commonplace hospitality of more crowded countries.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE WITH THE WILDERNESS BEGINS.

A ROARING fire of logs upon the wide hearth, logs built up into walls and roof, logs wrought into rough furniture of tables and stools—here, within the emigrant's hut, the all-encompassing forest had but changed its shape. Man had but pressed it into his service; from a foe it had become a friend; the wooden realm paid tribute, being subjugated.

The still life of the cabin was rude enough. No appliances for ease, not many for comfort, as we in England understand the words. Yet the settler's wife, sitting by her wheel, and dressed in the home-spun fruits thereof, had a well-to-do blooming aspect, which gaslight and merino could not have improved; and the settler's boy, building a miniature shanty of chips in the corner, his mottled skin testifying to all sorts of weather-beating, looked as happy as if he had a toyshop at his command, instead of the word being utterly unknown in his experience; and the baby, rolled up in the hollowed pine-log, slept as sweetly as if satin curtains inclosed its rest. Back to Sam Holt's mind recurred words which he knew well: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth."

The woman rose and curtsied. She had not been accustomed to make that respectful gesture for a long time back; but something in the appearance of the strangers half involuntarily constrained it.

"I needn't ask if you're Canadian-born," said Mr. Holt; "you've the manners of the old country."

"My father and mother were from Wiltshire, and so be I," she answered, setting back her wheel, and looking gratified at the implied commendation. "But that be so long ago as I scarce remember."

"And she made amends by marrying me," said the settler, entering from the outer door, and latching it behind him. "Mary, get the pan and fix some supper quick. Them duck I shot won't be bad. You see, I've been expectin' you along rather;" and he flung down an armful of wood, which he began to arrange with architectural reference to the back-log and fore-stick.

"Expecting us?" exclaimed Robert Wynn.

"You're for lot fifteen in ninth concession, township of Gazelle? Wall, so I guessed; for I heard from Zack Bunting who lives at the 'Corner,' that it was sold by Landenstein; and I calc'lated you'd be along presently:" and he finished his fire-building by a touch with his foot, which appeared to demolish much of his labour, but in reality conduced to his object of intensifying the heat and blaze.

"Benny," to the boy, who had sat on the ground staring at the new comers, "go tell your mother to be spry." The little fellow went accordingly, by the side door through which she had disappeared a few minutes previously; and the Irish servant, planting himself on the vacated spot with his toes to the fire comfortably, commenced to erect of the child's chips a two-storied mansion.

"You've got a good slice of bush there, back from the pond; though the cedars will be troublesome, I guess."

"Oh, we bargained for the cedars," said Sam Holt. "There's enough to clear without laying an axe to *them* for many a day."

"It's all the doing of that spring creek, running through the middle of the lot, as fine a water-privilege as ever I see; but the cedars are where it gets to the pond. If the bed was deepened down below, it's my opinion the swamp would be drained."

"You seem to know the ground well," said Robert, with interest.

"I guess I ought to, that have shot over it before ever a blazed line ran through them woods. We was furthest west once, but that's over by a long spell; the neighbourhood's pretty thick now, and the 'Corner' will be a town shortly."

"Well, if this is a thick neighbourhood, I should like to know his idea of a thin one," said Arthur, *sotto voce,* to Sam Holt. "We have met only this house for miles."

"Oh, they ain't many miles, only you thought they was, cos' I guess you ain't used to the stumps," put in the settler. "The back lot to ours, of the same number, is took by a Scotchman, and last week I run a blazed line across to his clearing through the bush; for you see I'm often away, trapping or still-hunting, and Mary here thought she'd be a trifle less lonesome if she had a way of going over the hill to her friend Mrs. Macpherson. The other way is round by the 'Corner,' which makes it five miles full; but now Benny can run across of a message, by minding the marks; can't you, my lad?"

"Yes, father," answered the boy, proudly. "And I can chop a blaze myself, too." Benny was not much taller than an axe handle.

Arthur looked from the child round at the wife, who was often left alone in this solitude of woods, and longed for the slender chain of a scarred line of trees between her and some other woman. A healthy, firm outline of face, wholly unacquainted with nervousness; quiet, self-reliant, hard-working; perhaps of a Dutch type of character. Her husband was a sturdy broad-set man, with lithe limbs, and quick senses looking out from his clear-featured countenance: he had a roving unsubdued eye, befitting the hunter more than the farmer.

"I wouldn't desire," said the latter, seating himself on the end of the table, while his wife superintended a pan of frizzling pork on the coals—"I wouldn't desire, for a feller that wanted to settle down for good, a more promising location than yourn at the Cedars. The high ground grows the very best sorts of hard wood—oak, sugar maple, elm, basswood. Not too many beech, or I'd expect sand; with here and there a big pine and a handful of balsams. The underbrushing ain't much, except in the swamp."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Mr. Holt, "for the fall is going fast, and we'll have to work pretty hard before snow comes."

"So I'm thinkin'. But *you* ain't going to settle: you haven't the cut of it: you're settled already."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, you didn't listen as they did," pointing his thumb towards the Wynns, "when I fell to talkin of the ground. I know'd my men at once. Nor you didn't stare about as they did, as if the house and fixins was a show at a copper ahead."

"You must excuse our curiosity," said Robert, politely.

"Surely; every man that has eyes is welcome to use 'em," replied the backwoodsman, bluntly. "We ain't got no manners in the bush, nor don't want 'em, as I tell Mary here, when she talks any palaver. Now, wife, them pritters must be done;" and he left his seat on the table, to pry over her pan.

"Then take the cakes out of the bake-kettle, will you," said

Mary; "and if them ducks be raw, 'tain't my fault, remember." She was evidently a woman of few words, but trenchant.

Thus warned, her husband did not press the point, but took the stewing fowl under his own care, displaying a practical experience of cookery won in many a day of bush life.

"These duck was shot on your pond, stranger; if you be a good hand with the gun, you'll never want for fresh meat while that water holds together. The finest maskelonge and pickerel I ever see was hooked out of it."

Arthur's face brightened; for the sportsman instinct was strong in him, and he had been disappointed hitherto by finding the woods along their track empty of game.

"'Cos the critters have more sense than to wait by the road to be shot," explained the backwoodsman, as he dished up his stew—a sort of hodgepodge of wildfowl, the theory of which would have horrified an epicure; but the practical effect was most savoury.

Now the boy Benny had never in his small life seen any edifice nobler than a loghouse on the ground-floor; and the upper story which Mr. Callaghan had built with his chips seemed to him as queer a phenomenon as a man having two heads.

"Well, only think of that!" exclaimed Andy; "the boy doesn't know what a stairs is."

"And how should he?" asked the father, rather sharply. "He ha'n't seen nothin' but the bush. One time I took him to Greenock, and he couldn't stop wonderin' what med all the houses come together. For all that, he ha'n't a bad notion of chopping, and can drive a span of oxen, and is growin' up as hardy as my rifle—eh, Benny?"

"He cut all the wood I wanted while you were away last time, Peter," chimed in the mother. So the strangers saw that the principle which leads parents to bore their unoffending visitors with copy-books and the "Battle of Prague," is applicable to backwood accomplishments also.

As a general rule, conversation does not flourish in the bush. The settler's isolated life is not favourable to exchange of thought, and events are few. Silence had fallen upon the woman in this house to a remarkable degree, and become incorporated with her. She went about her work quietly and quickly, speaking but five sentences in the course of the evening. The last of these was to notify to her husband that "the skins was ready."

"We've no beds," said he, with equal curtness. "You must try and be snug in a wrap-up on the floor to-night. More logs, Benny;" and additional wood was heaped down, while he brought forward a bundle of bear and buffalo skins, enough to blanket them all. Mary had already picked up the pine-log containing her baby, and taken it into the other room out of sight, whither her husband followed; and Benny crept into a sort of bed-closet in the far corner.

All night long, through the outer darkness, came a sound as of a limitless sea upon a lonely strand. Robert knew it for the wind wandering in the forest, and even in his home dreams it mingled a diapason, until the early sun gleamed through the chinks of the door, and flung a ray across his face. Simultaneously the poultry outside and the infant within woke up, commencing their several noises; and the farmer, coming out, built up the fire, and hung down the bake-kettle to heat for the breakfast bread. Then he invited his company to "a wash" at the spring; and, leading them by a wood path beside the house, they came to a pellucid pool fed by a rivulet, which, after flowing over its basin, ran off rapidly to lower ground. Here Benny was flung in by his father, though the water was quite deep enough to drown him; but he dived, and came out buoyant as a coot.

"Now go fetch the cow, my lad, and help your mother to fix breakfast, while we walk round the clearing." But this morning she had an efficient coadjutor in the person of Andy Callaghan, who dandled the baby while the cakes were being made, his sharp eye learning a lesson meantime; and milked the cow while the child was being dressed; and cut slices of pork, superintending its frizzling while the room was being set to rights. Three or four attempts to draw the silent woman into conversation were utterly abortive.

"Troth, an' you're a jewil of a wife," remarked the Irishman, when everything seemed done. "I'll engage I won't have the good luck to get one wid her tongue in such good ordher."

Mary Logan laughed. "It be from having no folk to talk with," she said.

"An' a sin an' a shame it is for himself to lave you alone," rejoined Andy, looking complimentary. "Now I want to know one thing that has been botherin' me ever since I came in here. What's them strings of yallow stuff that are hangin' out of the rafthers, an' are like nothin' I see in all my days, 'cept shavin's?"

"Sarce," answered Mrs. Logan, looking up; "them's sarce."

"I'm as wise as ever," said Andy. Whereupon she went to the compartment which acted as store-closet, and, bringing out a pie which had a wooden spoon erect in it, proffered him a bit.

"Ah," quoth Mr. Callaghan with satisfaction, "that's English talk; I know what that manes well. So ye calls apples 'sarce!' I've heerd tell that every counthry has a lingo of its own, an' I partly b'lieve it now. But throth, that way of savin' 'em would be great news intirely for the childer at home!"

So thought Robert Wynn afterwards, when he found the practice almost universal among the Canadians, and wondered that a domestic expedient so simple and serviceable should be confined to American housekeepers.

"Peter planted an orchard the first thing when we settled, and maples be plenty in the bush," said Mrs. Logan, with unusual communicativeness.

"Yes, ma'am," rejoined Andy, suavely, and not in the least seeing the connection between maple trees and apple-pie. "I wondher might I make bould to ax you for one of them sthrings? they're sich a curiosity to me." And he had the cord of leathern pieces stowed away in one of the provision hampers before the others came in from the fields.

There they had seen the invariable abundance and wastefulness of bush-farming: no trace of the economy of land, which need perforce be practised in older countries, but an extravagance about the very zig-zag fences, which unprofitably occupied, with a succession of triangular borderings, as much space as would make scores of garden beds. "Nobody cares for the selvedges when there is a whole continent to cut from," remarked Sam Holt, in a sententious way he had.

A yield of from twenty to five and twenty bushels per acre of wheat, and two hundred and fifty bushels of potatoes, were mentioned by the farmer as an average crop. His barns and root-house were full to repletion. Nothing of all this property was locked up: a latch on the doors sufficed.

"I suppose, then, you have no rogues in the bush?" said Robert.

"Where everybody's as well off as another, there aint no thievin'," was the pithy answer. "A wolf now and then among our sheep, is all the robbers we has."

After breakfast the bullocks were yoked afresh.

"I guess as how you've stumps before you to-day, a few," said the farmer, coming out axe on shoulder. "'Taint only a blaze up beyond your place at the Cedars, and not much better than a track of regulation width from the 'Corner' to there. Only for that job of underbrushing I want to get finished, I'd be along with you to-day."

He and his boy Benny walked with the travellers so far as their way lay together. The wife stood at the door, shading her eyes with her hand, till the lumbering waggon was lost to view round the edge of the woods.

The day's journey was just a repetition of yesterday's, with the stumps and the mud-holes rather worse. The "Corner," with its single sawmill and store, offered no inducement for a halt; and a tedious two miles further brought them to "hum."

CHAPTER XII.

CAMPING IN THE BUSH.

"WELL!" exclaimed Robert Wynn, "here is my estate; and neither pond, nor swamp, nor yet spring creek, do I behold."

He looked again at the landmark—an elm tree at the junction of the lot line and the concession road, which bore the numbers of each, "Nine, Fifteen," in very legible figures on opposite sides. A "blaze" had been made by chopping away a slice of the bark with an axe, about three feet from the ground, and on the white space the numbers were marked by the surveyor. All roads through the forest, and all farm allotments, are first outlined in this way, before the chopper sets to work.

The new townships in Upper Canada are laid out in parallel lines, running nearly east and west, sixty-six chains apart, and sixty-six feet in width; which are termed concession lines, being conceded by government as road allowances. These lands thus enclosed are sub-divided into lots of two hundred acres by other lines, which strike the concession roads at right angles every thirty chains; and every fifth of these lot lines is also a cross-road. We have all looked at maps of the country, and wondered at the sort of chess-board counties which prevail in the back settlements: the same system of parallelograms extends to the farms.

Robert's face was a little rueful. Twenty yards in any direction he could not see, for the overpowering bush, except along the line of road darkened with endless forest. The waggon was being un-packed, for the driver sturdily declared that his agreement had been only to bring them as far as this post on the concession: he must go back to the "Corner" that evening, on his way home.

"An' is it on the road ye'll lave the masther's things?" remonstrated Andy.

"I guess we han't no masters here, Pat," was the reply; "but if you see anywar else to stow the traps, I ain't partic'ler." And he stolidly continued unloading.

"Come," said the cheery voice of Sam Holt, "we will have daylight enough to explore the lot, and select a site for a camp. I think I can discover the tops of cedars over the hardwood trees here. The boxes will take care of themselves, unless a squirrel takes into his head to inspect them. Let's follow the concession line along westward first."

Callaghan stayed by the luggage, feeling by no means sure of its safety, and saw the rest of the party gradually receding among the trees, with sensations akin to those of a sailor on a desert island. Sitting upon the tool-chest, like an item of property saved from a wreck, Andy looked from the base to the summit of the huge walls of forest that encompassed him, and along the canal of sky overhead, till his countenance had fallen to zero.

The shipwrecked sensation had gone further: Mr. Holt saw it lurking in other faces, and forthwith found all advantages possible in the lot. The soil was sure to be the best: he could tell by the timber. Its height proved the depth of earth. When the trees grew shorter, a hidden treasure of limestone flag lay beneath the surface, useful for drains and building. And even the entangled cedar swamp was most desirable, as furnishing the best wood for rail-fences and logs for a house.

But nothing could look more unpromising. Blackish pools of water alternated with a network of massive roots all over the soil, underneath broad evergreen branches; trunks of trees leaned in every direction, as if top-heavy. Wilder confusion of thicket could not be conceived. "The cedars troublesome! I should think so," groaned their owner.

"This is the worst bit," acknowledged Sam. "Now, if we could see it, the lake is down yonder; perhaps if we strike a diagonal across the lot, we may come to some rising ground." With the pocket compass for guide they left the blazed line, which they had followed hitherto. After a short distance the bush began to thin, and the forest twilight brightened.

"A beaver meadow!" exclaimed Sam Holt, who was foremost. Green as emerald, the small semi-circular patch of grass lay at the foot of gentle slopes, as if it had once been a lakelet itself. "Two acres ready cleared, with the finest dairy grass only waiting to be eaten," continued encouraging Sam. "And the clearing on the hill will command the best view in the township; there's the site for your house, Wynn. Altogether you've had rare luck in this lot."

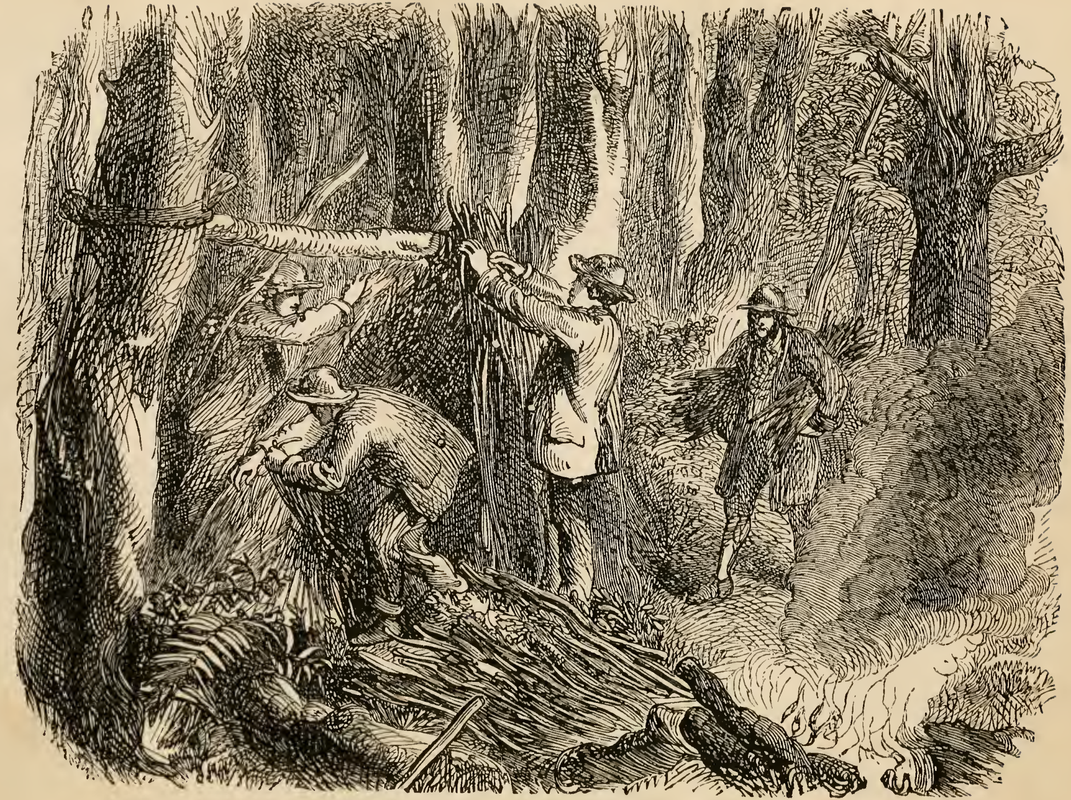
"But why is that green flat called a *beaver* meadow?" asked Robert.

"Do you see the creek running alongside? No, you can't for the underbrush; but it's there all the same. Well, they say that long ago beavers dammed up the current in such places as this, with clay and brushwood, so that the water spread over all level spaces near; and when the Indians and French were at war, the red men cut away the dams and killed the beavers wholesale, to spite their enemies. You're to take that just as an *on dit,* recollect."

"And is all that verdure an appearance or a reality?"

"Something of both: I don't say but you will occasionally find it treacherous footing, needing drainage to be comfortable. See! there's the pond at last."

They had been climbing out of the denser woods, among a younger growth on the face of the slope; and when they turned the sheet of water was partially visible over the sunken cedar swamp.



PREPARING FOR THE FIRST NIGHT IN THE BUSH.

"A pond!" exclaimed Arthur; "why, it must be three miles across to those limestone cliffs. What pretty islets! Such endless varieties of wood and water!"

"I think we Americans are rather given to the diminutive style of parlance," quoth Mr. Holt. "We have some justification in the colossal proportion of all the features of nature around us. What is this pretty lake but a mere pool, compared with our Erie and Superior?"

"It is one of a chain," remarked Robert, taking from his breast pocket a map of the district, which had his own farm heavily scored in red ink. Often had he contemplated that outline of the *terra incognita* on which he now trod, and longed for the knowledge he now possessed, which, after its manner, had brought him both good and evil. Like balls threaded on a cord, a succession of lakes, connected by cascades and portages, or by reaches of river, stretched away to the north-west, sorely marring the uniformity of the chess-board townships.

As they picked their way back along the lot line northward, Mr. Holt stopped suddenly. "I hear a very singular noise," he said, "for which I am wholly at a loss to account, unless there be Indians about in the neighbourhood. Even then, it is totally unlike their cries. Listen!"

His sharper senses had detected before theirs a distant wail, proceeding from some distance in front, apparently—weird and wild as it could be, dying away or surging upon the ear as the wind swept it hither or thither. Arthur shrugged his shoulders. "You have no ghosts in these forests, Holt, I suppose?"

"The country's too new for anything of the sort," replied he, gravely.

"Nor any mocking birds that can be playing us a trick? Or dryads warning us off their territory?"

He had recognised the performance of Andy Callaghan, who, when they turned the corner of the allotment, was discovered seated on the boxes as when they saw him last, and crooning the dismalest melody. But he had, in the meantime, recovered himself sufficiently to gather brushwood, and kindle a fire beside the road; likewise to cook a panful of rashers as the shadows grew longer and the day later.

"But sure I thought ye wor lost entirely; sure I thought ye wor never comin' at all, Masther Robert, avourneen. 'Twas that med me rise the keen. A single livin' thing I didn't lay my eyes on since, barrin' a big frog. I'm afeard thim are like sticks, Masther Arthur, they're so long fryin'."

"No matter, Andy, they'll do first-rate. I'd only advise you to chop up more. I feel like eating all that myself;" and, trencher on knee, they dined, with real backwood appetites.

A shelter for the night was the next consideration. Mr. Holt constituted himself architect, and commenced operations by lashing a pole across two trees at about his own height; the others cut sticks and shrubs for roofing. Three young saplings sloped back to the ground as principal rafters, and on these were laid a thatch of brushwood; the open ends of the hut were filled with the same material.

"Now," said Sam Holt, contemplating the work of his hands with professional pride, "when we have a big fire built in front, and a lot of hemlock brush to lie on, we shall be pretty comfortable."

And he instructed his novices further in the art of making their couch luxuriously agreeable, by picking the hemlock fine, and spreading over it a buffalo skin. Sam Holt had evidently become acquainted with "considerable" bush lore at his University of Toronto.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YANKEE STOREKEEPER.

Three men stood with their axes amid the primeval forest. Vast trunks rose around them to an altitude of thirty or even fifty feet without a bough; above, "a boundless contiguity of shade," and below, a dense undergrowth of shrubs, which seemed in some places impenetrable jungle. Three axes against thirty thousand trees. The odds were immensely in the dryads' favour; the pines and hardwoods might have laughed in every leaf at the puny power threatening their immemorial empire, and settled that *vis inertiæ* alone must overcome.

If, as Tennyson has bestowed upon the larkspur ears, the higher vegetation can listen also, the following conversation would that day have been heard from the triad of axmen beginning their campaign against the forest, and "bating no jot of heart or hope" in the contest.

"Here's the site for your shanty," said Mr. Holt, dealing a blow on a fine maple before him, which left a white scar along the bark. "It has the double advantage of being close to this fine spring creek, and sufficiently near the concession line."

"And I'm sanguine enough to believe that there will be a view at some future period," added Robert, "when we have hewed through some hundred yards of solid timber in front. By the way, Holt, why are all the settlers' locations I have yet seen in the country so destitute of wood about them? A man seems to think it his duty to extirpate everything that grows higher than a pumpkin; one would imagine it ought to be easy enough to leave clumps of trees in picturesque spots, so as to produce the effect of the ornamental plantations at home. Now I do not mean exclusively the lowest grade of settlers, for of course from them so much taste was not to be expected; but gentlemen farmers. and such like."

"I dare say they contract such an antipathy to wood of every species during their years of clearing, that it is thenceforth regarded as a natural enemy, to be cut down wherever met with. And when you have seen one of our Canadian hurricanes, you will understand why an umbrageous elm or a majestic oak near one's dwellings may not always be a source of pleasurable sensations."

"Still, I mean to spare that beautiful butternut yonder," said Robert; of all trees in the forest it is prettiest. And I shall try to clear altogether in an artistic manner, with an eye to the principles of landscape gardening. Why, Holt! many an English *parvenu* planning the grounds of his country seat, and contemplating the dwarf larches and infantine beeches struggling for thirty years to maturity, would give a thousand guineas for some of these lordly oaks and walnuts, just as they stand."

Sam Holt refrained from expressing his conviction that, after a winter's chopping, Robert would retract his admiration for timber in any shape, and would value more highly a bald-looking stumpy acre prepared for fall wheat, than the most picturesque maple-clump, except so far as the latter boded sugar.

"To leave landscape gardening for after consideration," said he, with some slight irony, "let us apply ourselves at present to the shanty. I think, by working hard, we might have walls and roof up before dark. Twenty by twelve will probably be large enough for the present—eh, Robert?"

Oh yes, certainly; for the house was to be commenced so soon, that the shanty could be regarded only as a temporary shelter. Blessed, labour-lightening sanguineness f youth! that can bound over intermediate steps of toil, and accomplish in a few thoughts the work of months or years.

So Mr. Holt measured the above dimensions on the ground, choosing a spot where the trunks appeared something less massive than elsewhere, and set his auxiliaries to cut down all the trees within the oblong, and for a certain distance round; arranging also that the logs should fall as near as might be to where they were wanted for the walls.

Now, the settler's first-felled tree is to him like a schoolboy's first Latin declension, or a lawyer's first brief—the pledge of ability the earnest of future performances. Every success braces the nerves of mind, as well as the muscles of body. A victory over the woodland was embodied in that fallen maple. But Andy was so near getting smashed in the coming down of his tree, that Mr. Holt ordered him to lay by the axe, and bring his spade, to dig a hole in a certain spot within the oblong.

"An' it's mighty harmless that crathur 'ud be agin the wood," muttered the Irishman; "throth, the earth in this counthry is mostly timber. An' in the name of wondher what does he want wid a hole, barrin' we're to burrow like rabbits?"

But the others were too busy felling or chopping trees into lengths of log, to heed Andy's wonderment; and the novices were agreeably surprised to find how dexterous they became in the handling of the axe, after even a few hours' practice. Their spirits rose; for "nothing succeeds like success," saith the Frenchman.

"Now I'll give you a lesson in basswood troughs," said Mr. Holt. "This shanty of yours is to be roofed with a double layer of troughs, laid hollow to hollow; and we choose basswood because it is the easiest split and scooped. Shingle is another sort of roofing, and that must be on your house; but troughs are best for the shanty. See here; first split the log fair in the middle; then hollow the flat side with the adze."

Robert was practising his precepts busily, when he was almost startled by a strange nasal voice beside him.

"Considerable well for a beginner; but I guess you put a powerful deal too much strength in yer strokes yet, stranger."

The speaker was a tall lank man, with black hair to correspond, and lantern jaws; little cunning eyes, and a few scrubby patches of rusty stubble on chin and cheeks. Robert disliked him at once

"Why didn't you stop at the 'Corner' yesterday? 'Twarn't neighbourly to go on right away like that. But it all come, I reckon, of Britisher pride and impudence."

Robert looked at him full, and demanded, "Pray who are you, sir?"

"Zack Bunting as keeps the store," replied the other. "I'm not ashamed neither of my name nor country, which is the U—nited States, under the glorious stars and stripes. I come up to help in raising the shanty, as I guessed you'd be at it to-day."

Young Wynn hardly knew what to reply to such an odd mixture of insolence and apparent kindness. The Yankee took the adze from his hand before he could speak, and set about hollowing troughs very rapidly.

"You chop, and I'll scoop, for a start. Now I guess you hain't been used to this sort of thing, when you was to hum? You needn't hardly tell, for white hands like yourn there ain't o' much use nohow in the bush. You must come down a peg, I reckon, and let 'em blacken like other folks, and grow kinder hard, afore they'll take to the axe properly. How many acres do you intend to clear this winter?"

"As many as I can."

"Humph! you should blaze 'em off all round, and work 'em reglar. You han't more than a month's 'brushing' now. Are you married?"

"No," replied Robert, waxing fierce internally at this catechism. "Are you?" by way of retaliation.

"This twenty year. Raised most of our family in the States. The old woman's spry enough yet, as you'll see when you come to the 'Corner.'"

All this time Mr. Bunting was chewing tobacco, and discharging the fluid about with marvellous copiousness, at intervals. Robert thought his dried-up appearance capable of explanation. "What made you come to settle in the bush?" was his next question.

"Holt!" called out Robert, quite unable patiently to endure any further cross-examination; and he walked away through the trees to say to his friend—"There's an intolerable Yankee yonder, splitting troughs as fast as possible, but his tongue is more than I can bear."

"Leave him to me," answered Sam; "his labour is worth a little annoyance, anyhow: I'll fix him." But he quietly continued at his own work, notwithstanding, and kept Robert beside him.

Mr. Bunting speedily tired of manufacturing the basswood troughs alone, and sloped over to the group who were raising the walls of the shanty.

"Wal, I guess you're gitting along considerable smart," he observed, after a lengthened stare, which amused Arthur highly, for the concentration of inquisitiveness it betrayed. "'Tain't an easy job for greenhorns nohow; but ye take to it kinder nateral, like the wood-duck to the pond." He chewed awhile, watching Sam's proceedings narrowly. "I guess this ain't your first time of notching logs, by a long chalk, stranger?"

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," was the reply. "Here, lend a hand with this stick, Mr. Bunting."

Zack took his hands from the pockets of his lean rusty trowsers, and helped to fit the log to its place, on the front wall; which, in a shanty, is always higher than the back, making a fall to the roof. Mr. Holt managed to keep the Yankee so closely employed during the next hour, that he took out of him the work of two, and utterly quenched his loquacity for the time being. "He shall earn his dinner, at all events," quoth Sam to himself.

"Wal, stranger, you *are* a close shave," said Zack, sitting down to rest, and fanning himself with a dirty brownish rag by way of handkerchief. "I hain't worked so hard at any 'bee' this twelve month. You warn't born last week, I guess."

"I reckon not," replied Sam, receiving the compliment as conscious merit should. "But we're not half done, Mr. Bunting; and I'd like such a knowledgeable head as yours to help fix the troughs."

"Oil for oil, in this world," thought Robert.

"Throth, they'll build me up intirely," said Andy to himself; "an' sorra door to get out or in by, only four walls an' a hole in the middle of the floor. Of all the quare houses that iver I see, this shanty bates them hollow. Masther Robert!" calling aloud, "I wondher have I dug deep enough?"

"Come out here, and get dinner," was the response. "We'll see to-morrow."

"'Tis asier said than done," remarked Andy, looking for a niche between the logs to put his foot in. "I hope this isn't the way we'll always have to be clamberin' into our house; but sorra other way do I see, barrin' the hole's to be a passage ondherground."

"You goose! the hole is to be a cellar, wherein to keep potatoes and pork," said his master, overhearing the tale of his soliloquy. Andy departed to his cookery enlightened.

Before the pan had done frizzling, whole rows of the ready-made troughs were laid along the roof, sloping from the upper wall plate to the back; and Mr. Bunting had even begun to place the covering troughs with either edge of the hollow curving into the centre of that underneath. Robert and Arthur were chinking the walls by driving pieces of wood into every crevice between the logs: moss and clay for a further stuffing must be afterwards found.

If the Yankee were quick at work, he fulfilled the other sequent of the adage likewise. His dinner was almost a sleight-of-hand performance. Arthur could hardly eat his own for concealed amusement at the gulf-like capacity of his mouth, and the astonishing rapidity with which the eatables vanished.

"While you'd be sayin' 'thrapstick,' he tucked in a quarter of a stone of praties and a couple of pound of rashers," said Andy afterwards. "Before the gintlemen was half done, he was picking his long yaller teeth wid a pin, an' discoorsin' 'em as impident as if he was a gintleman himself, the spalpeen!"

All unwitting of the storm gathering in the person of the cook, Mr. Bunting did indulge in some free and easy reflections upon Britishers in general, and the present company in particular; also of the same cook's attendance during their meal.

"Now I guess we free-born Americans don't be above having our helps to eat with us: we ain't poor and proud, as that comes to. But I'll see ye brought down to it, or my name's not Zack Bunting. It tickles me to see aristocrats like ye at work—rael hard work, to take the consait out of ye; and if I was this feller," glancing at Andy, "I'd make tracks if ye didn't give me my rights, smart enough."

The glow in the Irish servant's eyes was not to be mistaken.

"I guess I've riled you a bit," added the Yankee, wonderingly.

"An' what's my rights, sir, if yer honour would be plasin' to tell me?" asked Andy, with mock obsequiousness; "for I donno of a single one this minit, barrin' to do what my master bids me."

"Because I calc'late you've been raised in them mean opinions, an' to think yerself not as good flesh an' blood as the aristocrats that keep you in bondage."

"Come now," interrupted Sam Holt, "you shut up, Mr. Bunting. It's no bondage to eat one's dinner afterwards; and he'll be twice as comfortable."

"That's thrue," said Andy; "I never yet could ate my bit in presence of the quality: so that's one right I'd forgive; and as for me—the likes of *me*—bein' as good blood as the Misther Wynns of Dunore, I'd as soon think the Yankee was himself."

With sovereign contempt, Andy turned his back on Mr. Bunting, and proceeded to cook his dinner.

"Wal, it's the first time I see a feller's dander riz for tellin' him he's as good as another," remarked Zack, sauntering in the wake of the others towards the unfinished shanty. "I reckon it's almost time for me to make tracks to hum; the ole woman will be lookin' out. But I say, stranger, what are you going to do with that beaver meadow below on the creek? It's a choice slice of pasture, that."

"Cut the grass in summer," replied Sam Holt, tolerably sure of what was coming.

"I've as fine a red heifer," said the Yankee, confidentially, "as ever was milked, and I'd let you have it, being a new comer, and not up to the ways of the country, very cheap." His little black eyes twinkled. "I'd like to drive a trade with you, I would; for she's a rael prime article."

"Thank you," said Mr. Holt, "but we don't contemplate dairy farming as yet." Zack could not be rebuffed under half-a-dozen refusals. "Wal, if you won't trade, you'll be wantin' fixins from the store, an' I have most everythin' in stock. Some of my lads will be along to see you to-morrow, I reckon, and any whiskey or tobacco you wanted they could bring; and if you chose to run a bill——"

Refused also, with thanks, as the magazines say to rejected contributions. This, then, was the purport of Mr. Bunting's visit: to gratify curiosity; to drive a trade; to estimate the new settlers' worldly wealth, in order to trust or not, as seemed prudent. While at dinner, he had taken a mental inventory and valuation of the boxes and bales about, submitting them to a closer examination where possible. At the time, Robert thought it simply an indulgence of inordinate curiosity, but the deeper motive of self-interest lay behind.

"In their own phrase, that fellow can see daylight," remarked Mr. Holt, as Zack's lean figure disappeared among the trees. "I never saw little eyes, set in a parenthesis of yellow crowsfeet at the corners, that did not betoken cunning."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "CORNER."

Several days were employed in plastering all the crevices of the shanty with clay, cutting out a doorway and a single window in the front wall, and building a hearth and chimney. But when completed, and the goods and chattels moved in, quite a proud sense of proprietorship stole into the owner's heart.

As yet, this arduous bush-life had not ceased to be as it were a play: Sam Holt's cheery companionship took the edge off every hardship; and their youthful health and strength flourished under toil.

"Now, considering we are to be dependent on ourselves for furniture, the best thing I can fashion in the first instance will be a workbench," said Arthur, whose turn for carpentering was decided. "Little I ever thought that my childish tool-box was educating me for this."

"I think a door ought to be your first performance," suggested Robert. "Our mansion would be snugger with a door than a screen of hemlock brush."

"But I must go to the 'Corner' for boards, and that will take an entire day, the road is so vile. I can't see why I couldn't hew boards out of a pine myself, eh, Holt?"

"You want to try your hand at 'slabbing,' do you? I warn you that the labour is no joke, and the planks never look so neat as those from the sawmill."

"We have flung 'looks' overboard long ago," replied Arthur "Come, teach me, like a good fellow."

"Choose your tree as clean and straight in the grain as possible.

"And how am I to tell how its grain runs?" asked the pupil.

"Experiment is the only certainty; but if the tree be perfectly clear of knots for thirty or forty feet, and its larger limbs drooping downwards, so as to shelter the trunk in a measure from the influence of the sun, these are presumptions in favour of the grain running straight."

"What has the sun to do with it?"

"The grain of most trees naturally inclines to follow the annual course of the sun. Hence its windings, in great measure. Having selected and felled your pine, cut it across into logs of the length of plank you want."

"But you said something of experiment in deciding about the grain of the wood."

"Oh, by cutting out a piece, and testing it with the axe, to see whether it splits fair. When you have the logs chopped, mark the ends with a bit of charcoal into the width of your planks: then slab them asunder with wedges."

"Holt, where did you pick up such a variety of knowledge as you have?"

"I picked up this item among the lumber-men. You must know I spent more than one long vacation in exploring the most out-of-the-way locations I could find. But I'd advise you to go to the sawmill for your planks, though I do understand the theory of slabbing."

After due consideration—and as glass for the window was a want for which the forest could supply no substitute—it was agreed that all should take a half-holiday next day, and go down to the "Corner" to uncle Zack's store.

"Now that is settled," said Robert, with a little difficulty, "I wanted to say—that is, I've been thinking—that we are here in the wilderness, far away from all churches and good things of that kind, and we ought to have prayers of our own every evening, as my mother has at home."

"Certainly," said both Arthur and Sam Holt.

"I have never so felt the presence of God," added Robert, solemnly, "as since I've been in these forest solitudes; never so felt my utter dependence upon him for everything."

"No," rejoined Sam. "He seems to draw very near to the soul in the midst of these his grand works. The very stillness exalts one's heart towards him."

And so that good habit of family worship was commenced, inaugurating the shanty that very night. Andy Callaghan sat by and listened.

"Throth, but they're fine words," said he. "I wouldn't believe any one now, that that book is bad to listen to."

"And at home you'd run away from the sight of it. How's that, Andy?" asked Mr. Wynn.

"It's aisy explained, sir," replied the servant, looking droll. "Don't you see, I haven't his riverence at me elbow here, to turn me into a goat if I did anything contrary, or to toss me into purgatory the minit the breath is out of my poor body."

Thousands of Andy's countrymen find the same relief to their consciences as soon as they tread the free soil of Canada West.

Truly a primitive settlement was the "Corner." The dusk forest closed about its half dozen huts threateningly, as an army round a handful of invincibles. Stumps were everywhere that trees were not; one log-cabin was erected upon four, as it had been, legs ready to walk away with the edifice. "Uncle Zack's" little store was the most important building in the place, next to the sawmill on the stream.

"The situation must be unhealthy," said Robert; "here's marsh under my very feet. Why, there's a far better site for a town plot on my land, Holt."

"Ay, and a better water-privilege too. Let me see what your energy does towards developing its resources, Robert."

They discovered one source of the storekeeper's prosperity in the enormous price he exacted for the commonest articles. Necessity alone could have driven Arthur to pay what he did for the wretched little window of four panes to light the shanty. And uncle Zack had as much to say about the expense and difficulty of getting goods to a locality so remote, and as much sympathizing with his purchaser because of the exorbitant cost, as if he were a philanthropist, seeking solely the convenience of his neighbours by his sales.

"That fellow's a master of soft sawder when he chooses: but did you see how he clutched the hard cash after all? My opinion is, he don't often get paid in the circulating medium," said Arthur.

"Of that you may be sure," rejoined Sam Holt; "currency here lies more in potash or flour, just as they have salt in Abyssinia. Society seems to be rather mixed at the 'Corner.' Yonder's a French Canadian, and here's an Indian."

No glorious red man, attired in savage finery of paint and feathers; no sculptor's ideal form, or novelist's heroic countenance: but a mild-looking person, in an old shooting jacket and red flannel shirt, with a straw hat shading his pale coppery complexion. He wield a tomahawk or march on a war trail! Never. And where was the grim taciturnity of his forefathers? He answered when spoken to, not in Mohawk, or Cherokee, or Delaware, but in nasal Yankeefied English; nay, he seemed weakly garrulous.

"There's another preconceived idea knocked on the head," said Arthur. "My glorious ideal Indian! you are fallen, never to rise."

CHAPTER XV.

ANDY TREES A "BASTE."

Door and window were fitted into the holes cut in the front wall of the shanty, and no carpenter's 'prentice would have owned to such clumsy joinery; but Arthur was flushed with success, because the door could positively shut, and the window could open. He even projected tables and chairs in his ambitious imagination, *en suite* with the bedstead of ironwood poles and platted basswork bark, which ne had already improvised; and which couch of honour would have been awarded by common consent to Mr. Holt, had he not adhered to the hemlock brush with all the affection of an amateur.

The great matter on the minds of our settlers now, was the underbrushing. They might calculate on the whole month of November for their work—the beautiful dreamy November of Canada, as different from its foggy and muddy namesake in Britain as well may be. Measuring off thirty acres as next summer's fallow, by blazing the trees in a line around, took up the best part of a day; and it necessitated also a more thorough examination of Robert's domains. Such giant trees! One monarch pine must be nigh a hundred feet from root to crest. The great preponderance of maple showed that the national leaf symbol of Canada had been suitably selected.

"And is there no means," quoth Robert, who had been mentally gauging his small axe with the infinitude of forest—"is there no means of getting rid of wood without chopping it down?"

"Well, yes, some slower means still; the trees may be 'girdled;' that is, a ring of bark cut from the trunk near the base, which causes death in so far that no foliage appears next spring: consequently the tall melancholy skeleton will preside over your crops without injury."

"Can't say I admire that plan."

"You are fastidious. Perhaps you would like 'niggers' better?"

"I thought they were contraband in any but slave states."

"Oh, these are 'niggers' inanimate—pieces of wood laid round the trunk, and set on fire where they touch it; of course the tree is burned through in process of time. These two expedients might be useful in subsidiary aids; but you perceive your grand reliance must be on the axe."

"There is no royal road to felling, any more than to learning. And when may I hope to get rid of the stumps?"

"I don't think the pine stumps ever decay; but the hardwood, or those of deciduous trees, may be hitched up by oxen and a crowbar after six or seven years; or you might burn them down."

"Hulloa! what's that?"

The exclamation was from Robert, following a much louder exclamation from Andy in advance. "He has met with some wild animal," concluded Mr. Holt. He was certainly cutting the strangest capers, and flourishing his hand as if the fingers were burned, howling the while between rage and terror.

"You disgustin' little varmint! you dirty vagabone, to stick all thim things in me hand, an' me only goin' to lay a hold on ye gentle-like, to see what sort of an outlandish baste ye was! Look, Masther Robert, what he did to me with a slap of his tail!"

Callaghan's fingers radiated handsomely with porcupine's quills, some inches long, stuck in pretty strongly and deeply; and the animal himself, quite ready for further offensive warfare, crouched in the fork of a small maple, just out of reach.

"Ah, then, come down here, you unnatural baste, an' may be I won't strip off your purty feathers," exclaimed Andy with unction.

"Cut down the tree," suggested Arthur. But the porcupine, being more *au fait* with the ways of the woods than these new comers, got away among the branches into a thicket too dense for pursuit.

"They're as sharp as soords," soliloquized the sufferer, as he picked out the quills from his hand and wrist in rather gingerly fashion, and stanched the blood that followed. "Masther Robert, avourneen, is he a four-footed baste or a fowl? for he has some of the signs of both on him. Wisha, good luck to the poor ould counthry, where all our animals is dacent and respectable, since St. Patrick gev the huntin to all the varmint."

"A thrashing from a porcupine's tail would be no joke," observed Arthur.

"I've known dogs killed by it," said Mr. Holt. "The quills work into all parts of their bodies, and the barbed points make extraction very difficult."

"I believe the Indians use these in some sort of embroidery." Robert held in his hand a bunch of the quills such as had wounded Andy's fingers. "I've seen penholders of them, when I little thought I should handle the unsophisticated originals out here."

Before this time he had learned how enervating were reminiscences of home; he resolutely put away the remembrance from him now, and walked on to chop the blaze on the next tree. Breast-high the mark was cut, and at one blaze another could always be discerned ahead.

"I've a regard for the beeches and elms," quoth he, as he hacked at a hickory stem. They are home trees; but the shrubs have chiefly foreign faces, so I can chop them down without compunction."

All such sentimental distinctions will evaporate when you get into the spirit of your work," said his friend Sam. "Your underbrushing rule does not spare anything less than six inches in diameter; all must be cut close to the ground, and piled in heaps for the burning."

"A tolerable job to clear such a thicket as this! What a network of roots must interlace every foot of soil!"

"Rather, I should say. But the first crop will amply repay your pains, even though your wheat and Indian corn struggle into existence through stumps and interlacing roots. Then there's the potash—thirty dollars a barrel for second quality: less than two and a half acres of hardwood timber will produce a barrel."

"I don't quite understand."

"Next summer, after your logging bee, you'll know what I mean. This creek is as if 'twas made on purpose for an ashery."

"By the way, here's my site for a town plot;" as they came to a fine natural cascade over a granite barrier, after which plunge the stream hurried down the slope towards the beaver meadow. "Water power for half a dozen mills going to waste there, Holt."

"Let's give it a name!" sang out Arthur—"this our city of magnificent intentions."

"I hope you won't call it Dublin on the Liffey," said Mr. Holt. "How I hate those imported names—sinking our nationality in a ludicrous parody on English topography—such as London on the Thames, Windsor, Whitby, Woodstock; while the language that furnished 'Toronto,' 'Quebec,' 'Ottawa,' lies still unexplored as a mine of musical nomenclature."

"In default of an Indian name," said Robert, "let us call our future settlement after the existing fact—CEDAR CREEK."

"And posterity can alter it, if it chooses," rejoined Arthur. "All right. Now I'll cut down this birch where the post-office is to stand hereafter;" and a few sturdy blows of his axe prostrated the young tree. "When I'm writing to Linda, I shall date from Cedar Creek, which will give her an exalted idea of our location: at the same time she'll be convinced it is situated on the seashore, if I forget to say that in Canada every stream is a 'creek.'"

"Our people have an absurd partiality for what they imagine 'handsome names,'" said Mr. Holt. "Not satisfied with giving their children the most far-fetched they can discover—for instance, we have a maid Armenia, at Maple Grove, and I could not resist designating her brother as Ararat, by way of localizing their relationship—but also the young settlements of the country have often the most bombastic names. In the backwoods, one time, I found a party of honest settlers in a tavern over an old romance, searching for some sufficiently high-sounding title to confer on their cluster of cabins."

"I was amused to find that Jack Bunting's eldest son is called Nimrod, familiarized to 'Nim,'" said Robert. "I never saw a more remarkable likeness to a parent, in body and mind, than that youth exhibits: every tuft of ragged beard and every twinkle of the knowing little eyes are to match."

Nearing the shanty they heard a sound as of one making merry, and espied in the window the glow of a glorious fire. Within, Peter Logan was making himself at home, cooking his dinner, while he trilled a Yankee ditty at the top of his powerful voice.

No manner of apology for having opened their cellar, and made free with their barrel of pork, did he seem to think necessary; but when his meal was finished, he inquired abruptly why they hadn't built their chimney of "cats?" "For I reckon this stick chimney will blaze up some night," added he.

Robert hearkened at that startling intimation.

"Mine is of cats," said Mr. Logan. "Cats is clay," he continued sententiously, "kinder like straw an' clay mixed up. I guess I'll stay an' help you to fix one to-morrow, if you've a mind to."

With rugged but real kindness, he took a day from his hunting excursion for the purpose. The framework of the new chimney was of four upright poles, set in one corner of the shanty, and laced across by rungs of wood, round which the clay was well kneaded, and plastered inside. An opening three feet high was left for the fireplace in front. Peter promised that by and by the clay would burn hard and red, like tilework.

"I wonder you have not built yourself a handsome house, before now," said Mr. Wynn, "instead of that handsome barn. Why you live in a shanty, while your corn is in a frame building, puzzles me."

"Ay," assented the settler, "but the frame barn is paving the way for the frame house, I calculate: Benny 'll have both; and for the present I'd sooner have my crops comfortable than myself;" a persuasion which Robert afterwards found to be rooted in common sense, for the Canadian climate permits not of stacks or ricks wintering in the open air.

After his usual unmannerly fashion, Mr. Logan bade no farewell, but shouldered his gun at some hour prior to daybreak, and, knapsack on back, left the sleeping camp by the light of a young moon.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOST IN THE WOODS.

One day it happened that about noon, while Arthur was "brushing" at a short distance from the shanty, he noticed a pack of grouse among the underwood within shot. Dropping his axe, he ran home for the gun, which stood loaded in one corner.

It was not altogether the sportsman's organ of destructiveness (for he had never forgotten little Jay's lesson on that head), but probably a growing dislike to the constant diet of pork that urged him to an unrelenting pursuit. Cautiously he crept through the thickets, having wafted an unavailing sigh for the pointer he had left at Dunore, his companion over many a fallow and stubble field, who would greatly have simplified this business. Unconsciously he crossed the blazed side-line of the lot into the dense cover beyond, tantalized by glimpses of game, which never came near enough for good aim. "I must regularly stalk them," thought Arthur.

Noiselessly creeping on, he was suddenly brought to by an unexpected sight. The head and horns of a noble buck were for a moment visible through the thicket. Arthur's heart throbbed in his ears as he stood perfectly motionless. Grouse were utterly forgotten in the vision of venison. With every sense concentrated in his eyes, he watched the brush which screened the browsing deer. By a slight crackling of twigs presently, he was made aware that the animal was moving forward; he crept in the same direction. The leaves had been damped by a shower two hours before, and the cloudy day permitted them to retain moisture, or their crispness might have betrayed his tread.

Ha! a dried stick on which he inadvertently set his foot snapped across. The splendid shy eyes of the deer looked round in alarm as he bounded away. A shot rang through the forest after him, waking such a clamour of jays and crows and woodpeckers, that Arthur was quite provoked with them, they seemed exulting over his failure. Pushing aside the dried timber which had caused this mischance, he pressed on the track of the deer impetuously. He could not believe that his shot had missed altogether, though the white tail had been erected so defiantly; which "showing of the white feather," as the Canadian sportsman calls it, is a sign that the animal is unwounded.

But four feet had much the advantage of two in the chase. One other glimpse of the flying deer, as he came out on the brow of a ridge, was all that Arthur was favoured with. Some partridge got up, and this time he was more successful; he picked up a bird, and turned homewards.

Homewards! After walking a hundred yards or so he paused. Had he indeed gone back on his own track? for he had never seen this clump of pines before. He could not have passed it previously without notice of its sombre shade and massive boles. He would return a little distance, and look for the path his passage must have made in brushing through the thickets.

Brought to a stand again. This time by a small creek gurgling deeply beneath matted shrubs. He had gone wrong—must have diverged from his old course. More carefully than before, he retraced his way to the pine-clump, guided by the unmistakeable black plumage of the tree tops. There he stood to think what he should do.

The sky was quite obscured: it had been so all the morning. No guidance was to be hoped for from the position of the sun. He had heard something of the moss on the trees growing chiefly at the north side; but on examination these pines seemed equally mossed everywhere What nonsense! surely he must be close to his own path. He would walk in every direction till he crossed the track.

Boldly striking out again, and looking closely for footmarks on the soft ground, he went along some distance; here and there turned out of his straight course by a thicket too dense for penetration, till before him rose pine-tops again. Could it be? The same pines he had left!

He covered his eyes in bewilderment. Having stood on the spot for several minutes previously, he could not be mistaken. Yet he thought he could have been sure that he was proceeding in a direction diametrically opposite for the last quarter of an hour, while he must have been going round in a circle. Now, indeed, he felt that he was lost in the woods.

Poor Arthur's mind was a sort of blank for some minutes. All the trees seemed alike—his memory seemed obliterated. What horrid bewilderment had possession of his faculties? Shutting him in, as by the walls of a living tomb, the great frowning forest stood on all sides. A mariner on a plank in mid-ocean could not have felt more hopeless and helpless.

Rousing himself with a shake from the numb chill sensation which had begun to paralyze exertion, he thought that, if he could reach the little creek before mentioned, he might pursue his course, as it probably fell into their own lake at the foot of the Cedars. Keeping the pine-tops in a right line behind him, he succeeded in striking the creek, and discovering which way it flowed. After pushing his way some hours along a path of innumerable difficulties, he found himself, in the waning light, at the edge of a cypress swamp.

Almost man though he was, he could have sat down and cried. Blackest night seemed to nestle under those matted boughs, and the sullen gleams of stagnant water—the plash of a frog jumping in—the wading birds that stalked about—told him what to expect if he went further. At the same instant a gleam of copper sunset struck across the heavens on the tops of the evergreens, and the west was not in the direction that the wanderer had imagined; he now easily calculated that he had all this time been walking *from* home instead of towards it.

Strange to say, a ray of hope was brought upon that sunbeam, ven coupled with the conviction that he had been hitherto so wofully astray. To-morrow might be bright (and to all the wanderers in this world the anchor is to-morrow); he would be able to guide his course by the sun, and would come all right. He resolved to spend the night in a tree near his fire for fear of wild beasts, and selected a fine branching cedar for his dormitory. Laying his gun securely in one of the forks, and coiling himself up as snugly as possible, where four boughs radiated from the trunk, about twenty feet from the ground, he settled himself to sleep as in an arm-chair, with the great hushing silence of the forest around him. Unusual as his circumstances were, he was soon wrapt in a dreamless slumber.

Dull and slow dawned the November morning among the trees: broad daylight on their tops, when but a twilight reached the earth, sixty or eighty feet below. Arthur found himself rather stiff and chill after his unwonted night's lodging; he tried to gather up the brands of the evening's fire, which had sunk hours before into grey ashes, that he might at least warm himself before proceeding further. Simultaneously with its kindling appeared the sun—oh, welcome sight! and shot a golden arrow aslant a line of trees. Then was revealed to Arthur the mossy secret of wood-craft, that the north side bears a covering withheld from the south; for he perceived that, viewed in the aggregate, the partial greenery on the various barks was very distinct. Examining individual trunks would not show this; but looking at a mass, the fact was evident.

Now he knew the points of the compass; but of what practical avail was his knowledge? Whether he had wandered from the shanty to the north, south, east, or west, was only conjecture. How could that creek have led him astray? He must have crossed the rising ground separating two water-sheds—that sloping towards his own lake and towards some other. There flowed the little stream noiselessly, sucked into the swampy cypress grove: of course it got out somewhere at the other side; but as to following it any further into the dismal tangled recesses, with only a chance of emergence in a right direction, he felt disinclined to try.

No breakfast for him but a drink of water; though with carnivorous eyes he saw the pretty speckled trout glide through the brown pool where he dipped his hand; and he crossed the creek over a fallen tree, ascending to the eastward. He could not be insensible to the beauty of nature this morning—to the majesty of the mighty forest, standing in still solemnity over the face of the earth. Magnificent repose! The world seemed not yet wakened; the air was motionless as crystal; the infinitely coloured foliage clung to maples and aspens—tattered relics of the royal raiment of summer. The olden awe overshadowed Arthur's heart; his Creator's presence permeated these sublime works of Deity. Alone in the untrodden woods, his soul recognised its God; and a certain degree of freedom from anxiety was the result. Personal effort was not his sole dependence, since he had felt that God was present, and powerful.

Still he kept on to the south-east, hoping at last to strike some of the inhabited townships; and the unvarying solidity of forest was well nigh disheartening him, when he saw, after several miles walking, the distinctly defined imprint of a man's foot on some clayey soil near a clump of chestnut trees. Yes, there could be no mistake: some person had passed not long since; and though the tracks led away considerably from the south-easterly direction he had hitherto kept, he turned, without hesitation to follow them, and proceeded as rapidly as possible, in hope of overtaking the solitary pedestrian, whoever he might be. He shouted aloud, he sang some staves of various familiar old songs; but no response from other human voice came, anxiously as he listened for such echo. But the footmarks were before his eyes as tangible evidence; he had got very sharp by this time at detecting the pressure of a heel on the dead leaves, or the displacement of a plant by quick steps. The tracks must lead to something. Certainly; they led to a creek.

Impossible! It cannot be that he has followed his own footprints of yesterday! Planting his boot firmly on the bank beside the other mark, he compared the twain. A glance was enough: the impressions were identical.

The bewildered feeling of one in a labyrinth recurred. He saw nothing better for it than to return to the point whence he had diverged to follow the tracks. He now remembered having made this détour the previous day, to avoid cutting his way through a dense underwood on the bank of the stream.

Nigh an hour had been lost by this delusive retracing of footmarks. He thought that if he climbed the highest tree he could find, he would be able to get a bird's eye view of the country round. Oh that he might behold some islet of clearing amid the ocean of woods!

To reach the branches of any of the largest trees was the difficulty; for the smooth shaft of a massive marble pillar would be as easily climbed as the trunk of some arboreal giants here, rising fifty feet clear of boughs. However, by swinging from the smaller trees, he accomplished his object, and saw beneath him on all sides the vast continuity of forest.

Desert could not be lonelier nor more monotonous. No glimmer even of distant lake on the horizon; no brown spots of clearing; no variety, save the autumn coat of many colours, contrasted with sombre patches of pine. Stay—was not that a faint haze of smoke yonder? a light bluish mist floating over a particular spot, hardly moving in the still air. Arthur carefully noted the direction, and came down from his observatory on the run. He was confident there must be a trapper's fire, or a camp, or some other traces of humanity where that thin haze hung. He could not be baulked this time. Hope, which is verily a beauteous hydra in the young breast, revived again in strength. If he only had somewhat to eat, he wouldn't mind the long tramp before him. Beechmast rather increased than appeased his hunger; and nothing came in view that could be shot.

He had not walked far, when a sharp wild cry, as of some small animal in pain, struck his ear. Pushing away the brush at the left, he saw the cause—a little dark furry creature hanging to a sapling, as it seemed; and at his appearance the struggles to escape were redoubled, and the weakly cries of fear became more piteous. Arthur perceived that to the top of the sapling was fastened a steel snaptrap, clasping a forepaw in its cruel teeth, and that each convulsive effort to get free only set the animal dangling in the air, as a trout is played from a rod. Hopelessly snared, indeed, was the poor marten; he had not even the resource of parting with his paw, which, had he had any "purchase" to strive against, would probably have been his choice. By what blandishments of bait he had ever been seduced into his present melancholy position was out of Arthur's power to imagine.

But now at least it was beyond all doubt that men were near. Raising his eyes from inspection of the marten-trap, he saw on a tree close by a freshly-cut blaze. Some rods further on he could see another. Now a question arose, which way should he follow the line?—one end was probably in pathless forest. He concluded to take that direction which suited the smoke he had seen.

He wondered what blazed line this was—whether marking the side lots of a concession, or a hunter's private road through the woods. Presently, at a little distance, the sight of a man's figure stooping almost made his heart leap into his mouth. How lonely he had been, how almost desperate at times, he had not fully known till this his deliverance. Oh, that blessed human form! be he the rudest trapper or Indian, Arthur could have embraced him. Much more when, the face being lifted from examining the trap, and fixing its eyes with a very astonished stare on the approaching figure, Arthur recognised the shrewd features of Peter Logan.

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK TO CEDAR CREEK.

"I DECLAR, if you hain't 'most skeered me!" was Peter's exclamation. "For sartin I never seed a ghost, but it looked like enough this time. Now, do tell what brought you so far from hum? Thirteen mile, if it's a rod. You ain't lookin' partic'ler spry, anyhow. Now, Arthur, doen't, poor lad, doen't."

For he could not speak during a minute or two; his arm pressed heavily on the backwoodsman's sturdy shoulder, in the effort to steady the strong trembling that shook him from head to foot like a spasm of ague.

"Lost in the bush, you war? Well, that ain't agreeable no-how exactly;" and Peter betook himself to a fumbling in his capacious pocket for a tin flask, containing some reviving fluid. "Here, take a pull—this'll fix you all right. Warn't it wonderful that I went my road of traps when I did, instead of early this mornin'. There's a providence in that, for sartin."

Deep in Arthur's heart, he acknowledged the same truth gratefully.

"You've got a plaguy touch of ague, likely," added Peter considerately, willing to shift the responsibility of that trembling from the mind to the body; "campin' out is chill enough these nights. I han't much furder to go to the end of my blaze, and then I'll be back with you. So will you wait or come along?"

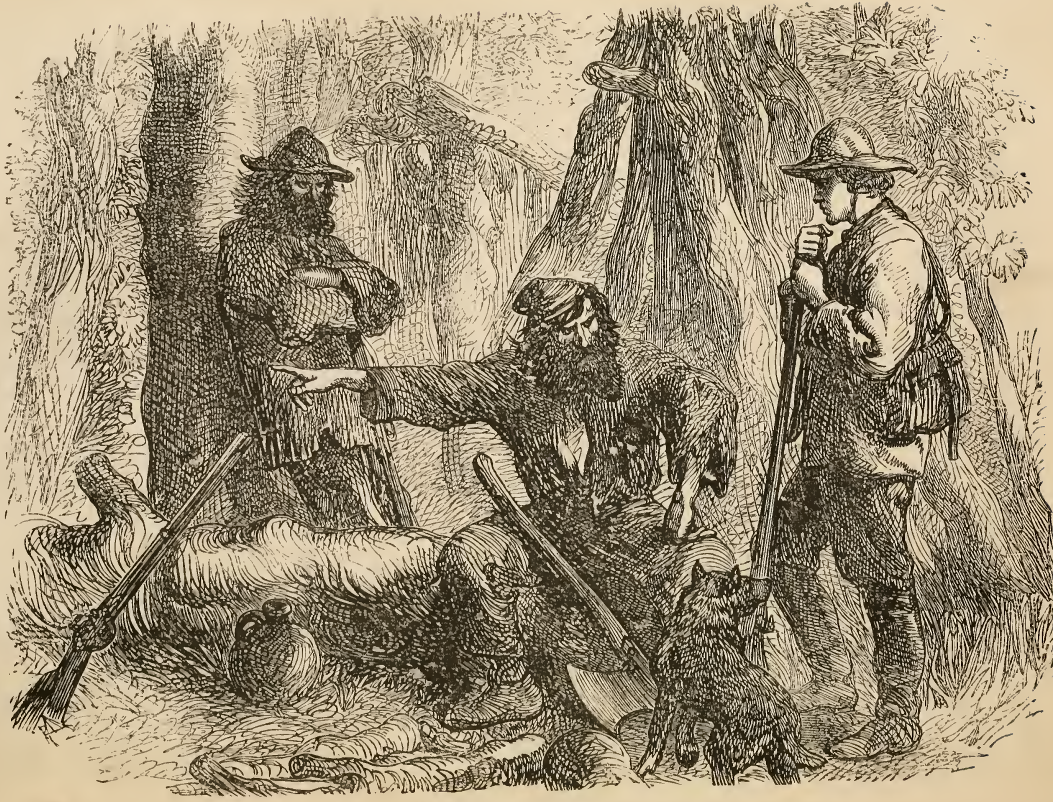
Arthur had too lately found human company, to be willing to relinquish it even with certainty of its return; he dreaded nothing so much as the same solitude whence he had just emerged; therefore he followed Peter, who over his shoulder carried a bag containing various bodies of minks, fishers, and other furry animals, snared in his traps, and subsequently knocked on the head by his tough service-rod.

That night Arthur found comfortable shelter in Peter's hut, and was initiated into many mysteries of a trapper's life, by him and his half-Indian assistant. Next morning they guided him as far as a surveyor's post, on which was legibly written the names of four townships, which was the signal for the separation of the party. Arthur turned his face towards civilization, along a blazed boundary line. The others plunged deeper into the woods, walking in the unsociable Indian file.

The blazed line went on fairly enough for some miles; over hillocks of hardwood, and across marshes of dank evergreens, where logs had been laid lengthwise for dry footing. At last Arthur thought he must be drawing near to a clearing; for light appeared through the dense veil of trees before him, as if some extensive break to the vast continuity of forest occurred beyond. Soon he stood on its verge. Ay, surely a clearing; but no human hands had been at work.

Hundreds of huge trees lay strewn about, as if they had been wrenched off their stumps by some irresistible power seizing the branched heads and hurling them to the earth. Torn up by the massy roots, or twisted round as you would try to break an obstinately tough withe, for many score of acres the wildest confusion of prostrate maples and elms and pines, heaped upon one another, locked in death-embraces, quite obliterated any track, and blocked across the country. Arthur had come upon what French Canadians call a "renversé," effected by some partial whirlwind during the preceding summer.

Such tornadoes often crash a road of destruction through the bush for miles; a path narrow in comparison with its length, and



ARTHUR FALLS IN WITH SQUATTERS.

reminding the traveller of the explosive fury of some vast projectile. The track of one has been observable for more than forty miles right through the heart of uninhabited forest.

To cross the stupendous barrier seemed impossible to Arthur. There was a tangled chaos of interlaced and withering boughs and trunks: such a *chevaux de frise* might stop a regiment until some slow sap cut a path through; and he was without axe, or even a large knife. He must work his way round; and yet he was most unwilling to part company with the blaze.

While hesitating, and rather ruefully contemplating the obstacle, a sound at a considerable distance struck his ear. It was—oh, joy!—the blows of an axe. Instantly he went in the direction. When near enough to be heard, he shouted. An answering hail came from the other side of the windfall; but presently he saw that an attempt had been made to log up the fallen timber in heaps, and, making his way through the blackened stumps of extinct fires, he reached the spot where two rough-looking men were at work with handspikes and axes.

They had built a little hut, whence a faint smoke curled, the back wall of piled logs still wearing dead branches and foliage at the ends. A reddish cur, as lawless-looking as his masters, rushed from the doorway to snap at Arthur's heels. The suspicious glances of the foresters bore hardly more welcome, till they heard that the stranger belonged to the settlers on Cedar Pond, and had simply lost his way. They informed him in return, with exceeding frankness, that they were squatters, taking possession of this strip of bush without anybody's leave, and determined to hold their own against all comers. An apparently well-used rifle lying against a log close by gave this speech considerable emphasis.

Arthur wanted nothing more from them than to be put on the surveyor's line again; and, when directed to the blaze, speedily left the sound of their axes far behind. In half an hour he reached other traces of mankind—a regularly chopped road, where the trees had been felled for the proper width, and only here and there an obstinate trunk had come down wrongly, and lay right across, to be climbed over or crept under according to the wayfarer's taste. In marshy spots he was treated to strips of corduroy; for the settled parts of the country were near.

"Holloa! Uncle Zack, is that you?"

The person addressed stood in a snake-fenced field, superintending a couple of labourers. He turned round at the hail, and stared as if he did not believe his senses.

"Wal, I guess I warn't never skeered in my life before. They're all out lookin' for you; Nim, an' the whole 'Corner' bodily. Your brother's distracted ravin' mad this two days huntin' the bush; but I told him you'd be sartin sure to turn up somehow. Now, whar are you runnin' so fast? there ain't nobody to hum, an' we 'greed to fire the rifles as a signal whoever fust got tidins of you. Three shots arter another," as young Wynn fired in the air. "Come, quick as wink, they'll be listenin'."

"Robert will know the report," observed Arthur, with a smile to think of his pleasure in the recognition, "if he's near enough."

"We'll make tracks for the 'Corner,' I guess," said uncle Zack with alacrity; "that war the meetin'-place, an' you must be powerful hungry. I'd ha' been to sarch for you to-day, only them Irish fellers at the clearin' wanted lookin' arter precious bad." ("Lucky I got in them kegs o' whisky; he'll have to stand treat for the neighbours," thought 'cute uncle Zack, in a sort of mental parenthesis). "But now do tell! you must ha' gone a terrible big round, I guess. They took the Indjin out to foller your trail; them savages has noses an' eyes like hounds. We'll fire my rifle from the store; it's bigger than yourn."

His abstraction of mind during Arthur's narrative was owing to a judicious maturing of certain plans for exacting the greatest amount of profit from the occurrence; but he contrived to interlard his listening with such appropriate interjections as, "Now do tell!

How you talk! Wal, I kinder like to know!" mentally watering his whisky the while.

Mrs. Zack, also scenting the prey afar off, was polite as that lady could be to good customers only. Arthur's impatience for the arrival of the parties from the bush hardly permitted him to do more than taste the meal she provided. Within doors he could not stay, though weary enough to want rest. The few log-cabins of the "Corner" looked more drowsily quiet than usual; the saw-mill was silent. Zack was turning over some soiled and scribbled ledgers on his counter. Suddenly a shot in the woods quite near: a detachment of the searchers had arrived.

That the rejoicing would take its usual form, an emptying of his spirit-kegs, Zack Bunting had never doubted. But the second word to the bargain, Mr. Wynn's promise to stand treat, had not been given, though it was a mere matter of form, Zack thought. Robert spoke to the neighbours, and thanked them collectively for their exertions in a most cordial manner on behalf of himself and his brother, and was turning to go home, when the Yankee store-keeper touched his elbow.

"'Tain't the usual doins to let 'em away dry," suggested he, with a meaning smile. "'Spose you stand treat now; 'twill fix the business handsome."

That keen snaky eye of his could easily read the momentary struggle in Robert's mind between the desire not to appear singular and unfriendly, and the dislike to encouraging that whisky drinking which is the bane of working men everywhere, but most especially in the colonies. Sam Holt watched for his decision. Perhaps the knowledge of what that calm strong nature by his side would do helped to confirm Robert's wavering into bold action.

"Certainly not," he said loudly, that all might hear. "I'll not give any whisky on any account. It ruins nine-tenths of the people. I'm quite willing to reward those who have kindly given time and trouble to help me, but it shall not be in that way."

Zack's smoke-dried complexion became whitewashed with disappointment.

A day or two afterwards, Zack's son, Nimrod, made his appearance at the Wynns' shanty.

"I say, but you're a prime chap arter the rise you took out of the ole coon," was his first remark. "Uncle Zack was as sartin as I stand of five gallons gone, anyhow; and 'twar a rael balk to put him an' them off with an apology. I guess you won't mind their sayin' it's the truth of a shabby dodge, though."

"Not a bit," replied Robert; "I expected something of the kind. I didn't imagine I'd please anybody but my own conscience."

"'Conscience!'" reiterated Nim, with a sneer. "That stock hain't a long life in the bush, I guess. A storekeeper hain't no business on it nohow—'twould starve him out; so uncle Zack don't keep it." And his unpleasant little eyes twinkled again at the idea of such unwonted connection as his father and a conscience.

"That Indjin war hoppin' mad, I can tell you; for they be the greatest brutes at gettin' drunk in the univarsal world. They'll do 'most anythin' for whisky."

"The greater the cruelty of giving it to them," said Robert.

"What are you doin'?" asked Nimrod, after a moment's survey of the other's work.

"Shingling," was the reply. "Learning to make shingles."

"An' you call *them* shingles?" kicking aside, with a gesture of contempt, the uneven slices of pinewood which had fallen from Robert's tool. "You hain't dressed the sapwood off them blocks, and the grain eats into one another besides. True for uncle Zack that gentry from the old country warn't never born to be handlin' axes an' frows. It don't come kinder nateral. They shouldn't be no thicker than four to an inch to be rael handsome shingles," added he, "such as sell for seven-an'-sixpence a thousand."

Nimrod's pertinacious supervision could not be got rid of until dinner; not even though Mr. Wynn asked him his errand in no conciliatory tone.

"Thought I'd kinder like to see how ye were gettin' on," was the answer. "New settlers is so precious awk'ard. Thought I'd loaf about a while, an' see. It's sorter amusin'."

He was so ignorantly unconscious of doing anything offensive by such gratification of his curiosity, that Robert hardly knew whether to laugh or be angry. Nimrod's thick-skinned sensibilities would have cared little for either. He lounged about, whittling sticks, chewing tobacco, and asking questions, until Andy's stentorian call resounded through the woods near.

"I guessed I'd dine with you to-day," said Nim, marching on before his host. With equal coolness, as soon as the dish of trout appeared, he transfixed the largest with his caseknife.

"Not so fast, my friend," interrupted Mr. Holt, bringing back the captive. "We divide fair here, though it's not Yankee law, I'm aware."

"Ah, you warn't born yesterday," rejoined Nim, showing his yellow teeth, which seemed individually made and set after the pattern of his father's. "You're a smart man, I guess—raised in Amerikay, an' no mistake."

"But come, Andy," said Arthur, "tell us where you caught these fine trout? You've altogether made a brilliant effort to-day in the purveying line: the cakes are particularly good."

"They're what them French fellers call 'galettes,'" observed Nimrod, biting one. "Flour an' water, baked in the ashes. Turnpike bread is better—what the ole gall makes to hum."

Be it remarked that this periphrasis indicated his mother; and that the bread he alluded to is made with a species of leaven.

"So ye *ate* turnpikes too," remarked Andy, obliquely glancing at the speaker. "The English language isn't much help to a man in this counthry, where everythin' manes somethin' else. Well

Misther Arthur, about the trout; you remimber I went down to the 'Corner' this mornin'. Now it's been on my mind some days back, that ye'd want a few shirts washed."

"But what that has to do with the trout——" interrupted Arthur, laughing.

"Whisht awhile, an' you'll hear. I didn't know how to set about it, no more than the child of a month old; for there's an art in it, of coorse, like in everythin' else; an' one time I thried to whiten a shirt ov me own—beggin' yer honours' pardon for mintionin' the article—it kem out of the pot blacker than it wint in. So sez I to meself, 'I'll look out for the clanest house, an I'll ax the good woman to tache me how to wash a thing; an' I walks along from the store to a nate little cabin back from the river, that had flowers growin' in the front; an' sure enough, the floor was as clane as a dhrawin' room, an' a dacent tidy little woman kneadin' a cake on the table. 'Ma'am,' sez I, 'I'm obliged to turn washerwoman, an' I don't know how;' but she only curtsied, and said somethin' in a furrin tongue."

"A French Canadian, I suppose," said Mr. Wynn.

"Jackey Dubois lives in the log-hut with the flowers," observed Nim, who was whittling again by way of dessert.

"May be so; but at all events she was as like as two peas to the girl whose weddin' I was at since I came ashore. 'Ma'am,' sez I, 'I want to larn to be a washerwoman:' and wid that I took off my neckerchief an' rubbed it, to show what I meant, by the rule of thumb. 'Ah, to vash,' sez she, smilin' like a leathercoat potato. So, afther that, she took my handkercher and washed it fornent me out; an' I'd watched before how she med the cakes, an' cleared a little space by the fire to bake 'em, an' covered them up wid hot ashes."

"Not a word about the trout," said Arthur.

"How can I tell everything intirely all at wanst?" replied the Irishman, with an injured tone. "Sure I was comin' to that. I observed her lookin' partikler admirin' at the handkercher, which was a handsome yellow spot, so I up an' axed her to take a present of it, an' I settled it like an apron in front, to show how iligant 'twould look; an' she was mighty plased, an' curtsied ever so often, an' Jackey himself gev me the trout out of a big basket he brought in. The river's fairly alive wid 'em, I'm tould: an' they risin' to a brown-bodied fly, Misther Arthur."

"We'll have a look at them some spare day, Andy."

"But what tuk my fancy intirely, was the iligant plan of bilin' 'em she had. There war round stones warmin' in the fire, an' she dropped 'em into a pot of water till it was scalding hot; then in wid the fish, addin' more stones to keep it singin'. It's an Indjin fashion, Jackey told me; for they haven't nothin' to cook in but wooden pails; but I thried it wid them trout yer atin', an' it answered beautiful."

Andy bid fair to be no mean *chef-de-cuisine*, if his experiments always resulted so favourably as in the present instance.

"An' the whole of it is, Misther Robert, that this Canada is a counthry where the very best of atin' and dhrinkin' is to be had for the throuble of pickin' it up. Don't I see the poorest cabins wid plenty of bacon hangin' to the rafthers, an' the trees is full of birds that nobody can summons you for catchin', and the sthrames is walkin' wid fish; I'm tould there's sugar to be had by bilin' the juice of a bush; an' if you scratch the ground, it'll give you bushels of praties an' whate for the axin'. I wish I had all the neighbours out here, that's a fact; for it's a grand poor man's counthry, an' there's too many of us at home, Misther Robert; an' (as if this were the climax of wonders) I never see a beggar since I left the Cove o' Cork!"

"All true, Andy, quite true," said his master, with a little sigh. "Hard work will get a man anything here."

"I must be goin'," said Nimrod, raising his lank figure on its big feet. "But I guess that be for you;" and he tossed to Robert a soiled piece of newspaper, wrapped round some square slight packet.

"Letters from home! Why, you unconscionable——" burst forth Arthur; "loafing about here for these three hours, and never to produce them!" But Nim had made off among the trees, grinning in every long tooth.

Ah, those letters from home! How sweet, yet how saddening! Mr. Holt went off to chop alone. But first he found time to intercept Nimrod on the road, and rather lower his triumphant flush at successfully "riling the Britishers," by the information that he (Mr. Holt) would write to the post-office authorities, to ask whether their agent at the "Corner" was justified in detaining letters for some hours after they might have been delivered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GIANT TWO-SHOES.

The calendar of the settler is apt to get rather confused, owing to the uniformity of his life and the absence of the landmarks of civilization. Where "the sound of the church-going bell" has never been heard, and there is nothing to distinguish one day from another, but the monotonous tide of time lapses on without a break, it will easily be imagined that the observance of a sabbath is much neglected, either through forgetfulness or press of labour. The ministrations of religion by no means keep pace with the necessities of society in the Canadian wilds. Here is a wide field for the spiritual toil of earnest men, among a people speaking the English language and owning English allegiance; and unless the roots of this great growing nation be grounded in piety, we cannot hope for its orderly and healthful expansion in that "righteousness which exalteth a people."

Once a year or so, an itinerant Methodist preacher visited the

"Corner," and held his meeting in Zack Bunting's large room. But regular means of grace the neighbourhood had none. A result was, that few of the settlers about Cedar Creek acknowledged the sabbath rest in practice; and those who were busiest and most isolated sometimes lost the count of their week-days altogether. Robert Wynn thought it right to mark off Sunday very distinctly for himself and his household by a total cessation of labour, and the establishment of regular worship. Andy made no sort of objection, now that he was out of the priest's reach.

Other days were laborious enough. In the underbrushing was included the cutting up all fallen timber, and piling it in heaps for the spring burnings. Gradually the dense thickets of hemlock, hickory, and balsam were being laid in windrows, and the long darkened soil saw daylight. The fine old trees, hitherto swathed deeply in masses of summer foliage, stood with bared bases before the axe, awaiting their stroke likewise.

Then the latest days in November brought the snow. Steadily and silently the grey heavens covered the shivering earth with its smooth woolly coating of purest flakes. While wet Atlantic breezes moaned sorrowfully round Dunore, as if wailing over shattered fortunes, the little log-shanty in the Canadian bush was deep in snow. Not so large as the butler's pantry in that old house at home, nor so well furnished as the meanest servant's apartment had been during the prosperous times, with hardly one of the accessories considered indispensable to comfort in the most ordinary British sitting room, yet the rough shanty had a pleasantness of its own, a brightness of indoor weather, such as is often wanting where the fittings of domestic life are superb. Hope was in the Pandora's box to qualify all evils.

By the firelight, the settlers were this evening carrying on various occupations. Mr. Holt's seemed the most curious, and was the centre of attraction, though Robert was cutting shingles, and Arthur manufacturing a walnut-wood stool in primitive tripod style.

"I tell you what," said he, leaning on the end of his plane, whence a shaving had just slowly curled away, "I never shall be able to assist at or countenance a logging-bee, for I consider it the grossest waste of valuable merchandise. The idea of voluntarily turning into smoke and ashes, the most exquisitely grained bird's-eye maple, black walnut, heart-of-oak, cherry, and birch—it's a shame for you, Holt, not to raise your voice against such wilful waste, which will be sure to make woful want some day. Why, the cabinet-makers at home would give you almost any money for a cargo of such walnut as this under my hand."

"I regret it as much as you do; but till the country has more railroads it is unavoidable, and only vexatious to think of. We certainly do burn away hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of the most expensive wood, while people in England pay enormous prices for furniture which our refuse timber could supply."

"And don't you export any ornamental wood?" asked Robert. "I saw plenty of deals swimming down the St. Lawrence."

"Yes, pine timber meets with the readiest market, and is easiest procurable. But even in that there is the most unjustifiable wastefulness practised. I was among the lumberers once, and saw the way they square the white pine. You know that every tree is of course tapering in the trunk, narrower at the top than at the base; now, to square the log, the best timber of the lower part must be hewn away, to make it of equal dimensions with the upper part. I am not above the mark when I say that millions of excellent boards are left to rot in the forest by this piece of mismanagement, and the white-pine woods are disappearing rapidly."

But Arthur's sympathies could not be roused, for such ordinary stuff as deal, to the degree of resentment he felt for the wholesale destruction of cabinet-makers' woods.

"If I may make so bould, sir," said Andy, edging forward, "might I ax what yer honour is makin'? Only there aren't any giants in the counthry, I'd think it was a pair of shoes, may be."

"You've guessed rightly," replied Mr. Holt, holding up his two colossal frames, so that they rested on edge. "Yes, Andy, a pair of shoes near six feet long! What do you think of that new Canadian wonder?"

"I dunno where you'll get feet to fit 'em," said Andy, dubiously. "They're mostly as big as boats, an' much the same shape. May be they're for crossin' the wather in?"

"I intend to wear them myself, Andy," said the manufacturer, "but on dry land. You must be looking out for a pair too, if the snow continues, as is pretty certain, and you want to go down to the 'Corner' before it is frozen over."

"Why have you cut that hole in the middle of the board?" asked Robert, inspecting the gigantic wooden sole.

"To give the toes play," was the answer. "All parts of the foot must have the freest action in snow-shoes."

"I remember a pair at Maple Grove," said Arthur, "made of leathern network, fastened to frames and crossbars, with the most complicated apparatus for the foot in the middle."

"It is said by scientific men," said Mr. Holt, "that if the theory of walking over soft snow were propounded, not all the mechanical knowledge of the present day could contrive a more perfect means of meeting the difficulty, than that snow-shoe of the Ojibbeway Indians. It spreads the weight equally over the wide surface: see, I've been trying, with these cords and thongs, to imitate their mechanism in this hollow of my plank. Here's the walking thong, and the open mesh through which the toes pass, and which is pressed against by the ball of the foot, so as to draw the shoe after it. Then here's the heel-cord, a sort of sling passing round so as partially to imprison and yet leave free. The centre of the foot is held fast enough, you perceive."

Robert shook his head. "One thing is pretty clear," said he, "*I* shall never be able to walk in snow-shoes."

"Did you think you would ever be expert at felling pines?" was Mr. Holt's unanswerable answer.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MEDLEY.

"We may soon expect winter," said Sam Holt, as he drew forth his gigantic snow-shoes, which had been standing up against the interior wall of the shanty, and now emerged into the brilliant sunshine.

"Soon expect it!" ejaculated Robert; "why, I should say it had very decidedly arrived already. I am sure twelve inches of snow must have fallen last afternoon and night."

"It is late this year; I've seen it deep enough for sleighing the second week in November; and from this till March the ground will be hidden, generally under a blanket four feet thick. You are only on the outskirts of winter as yet."

"Four months! I wonder it doesn't kill all vegetation."

"On the contrary, it is the best thing possible for vegetation. Only for the warm close covering of snow, the intense and long-continued frost would penetrate the soil too deeply to be altogether thawed by the summer sun."

"I was very much struck," said Robert, "by seeing, in a cemetery near Quebec, a vault fitted with stone shelves, for the reception of the bodies of people who die during winter, as they cannot be properly interred till the next spring."

"Yes; Lower Canada is much colder than our section of the province. Learned men say something about the regular northward tendency of the isothermal lines from east to west; certain it is that, the further west you go, the higher is the mean annual temperature, back to the Pacific, I believe. So the French Canadians have much the worst of the cold. You might have noticed flights of steps to the doors of the *habitans?* That was a provision against snowing time; and another proof of the severity of the frost is, that any mason work not bedded at least three feet deep into the earth is dislodged by the April thaws.

"Now what would you say to freezing up your winter stores of meat and fowls? They're obliged to do it in Lower Canada. Fresh mutton, pork, turkeys, geese, fowls, and even fish, all stiff and hard as stone, are packed in boxes and stowed away in a shed till wanted. The only precaution needful is to bring out the meat into the kitchen a few days before use, that it may have time to thaw. Yet I can tell you that winter is our merriest time; for snow, the great leveller, has made all the roads, even the most ricketty corduroy, smooth as a bowling-green; consequently sleighing and toboggin parties without end are carried on."

"That's a terribly hard word," remarked Arthur.

"It represents great fun, then, which isn't generally the case with hard words. A toboggin is an Indian traineau of birch-bark, turned up at one end, and perfectly level with the snow. A lady takes her seat on this, and about a foot and a half of a projection behind her is occupied by a gentleman, who is the propelling instrument for the vehicle. He tucks one leg under him, and leaves the other trailing on the snow behind, as a rudder. I should have told you that, first of all, the adventurous pair must be on the top of a slope; and when all is ready, the gentleman sets the affair in motion by a vigorous kick from his rudder leg. Of course the velocity increases as they rush down the slope; and unless he is a skilful steersman, they may have a grand upset or be embosomed in a drift; however, the toboggin and its freight generally glides like an arrow from the summit, and has received impetus enough to carry it a long distance over the smooth surface of the valley at foot."

"How first-rate it must be!" exclaimed Arthur. "But we shall never see a human being in these back-woods;" and over his handsome face came an expression of *ennui* and weariness which Robert disliked and dreaded. "Come, Holt, I'm longing to have a try at the snow-shoes:" and his volatile nature brightened again immediately, at the novelty.

"I'm afraid they're too long for this little clearing, among all the stumps," said the manufacturer; "you may wear them eighteen inches shorter in the forest than on the roads or plains. At all events, I'll have to beat the path for you first;" and having fixed his mocassined feet in the walking thong and heel-cord, with his toes just over the "eye," he began to glide along, first slowly and then swiftly. Now was the advantage of the immense sole visible; for whereas Robert and Arthur sank far above their ankles at every step in the loose dry snow, Mr. Holt, though much the heaviest of the three, was borne on the top buoyantly.

"You see the great necessity is," said he, returning by a circuit, "that the shoe should never press into the snow; so you must learn to drag it lightly over the surface, which requires some little practice. To render that easier, I've beaten the track slightly."

"Holt, are those genuine Indian mocassins?" asked Robert, as he ungirded his feet from the straps of the snow-shoes.

"Well, they're such as I've worn over many a mile of Indian country," was the answer; "and I can recommend them as the most agreeable *chaussure* ever invented. Chiropodists might shut shop, were mocassins to supersede the ugly and ponderous European boot, in which your foot lies as dead as if it had neither muscles nor joints. Try to cross a swamp in boots, and see how they'll make holes and stick in them, and only come up with a slush, leaving a pool behind; but mocassined feet trip lightly over: the tanned deer-hide is elastic as a second skin, yet thick enough to ward off a cut from thorns or pebbles, while giving free play to all the muscles of the foot."

"You haven't convinced me: it's but one remove from barefootedness. Like a good fellow, show me how I'm to manage these monstrous snow-shoes: I feel as queer as in my first pair of skates."

Mr. Holt did as required. But the best theoretical teaching about anything cannot secure a beginner from failures, and Arthur was presently brought up by several inches of snow gathered round the edges of his boards, and adding no small weight.

"It *will* work up on them," said he, (as, when a smaller boy, he had been used to blame everything but himself,) "in spite of all I can do."

"Practice makes perfect," was Sam Holt's consolatory remark. "Get the axes, Robert, and we'll go chop a bit."

"I'll stay awhile by the snow-shoes," said Arthur.

The others walked away to the edge of the clearing, Mr. Holt having first drawn on a pair of the despised European boots.

Never had Robert seen such transparent calm of heaven and earth as on this glorious winter day. It was as if the common atmosphere had been purified of all grosser particles—as if its component gases had been mixed afresh, for Canadian use only. The cold was hardly felt, though Mr. Holt was sure the thermometer must be close upon zero; but a bracing exhilarating sensation strung every nerve with gladness and power.

"You'll soon comprehend how delightful our winter is," said Sam Holt, noticing his companion's gradually glowing face. "It has phases of the most bewitching beauty. Just look at this white spruce, at all times one of our loveliest trees, with branches feathering down to the ground, and every one of its innumerable sea-green leaves tipped with a spikelet which might be a diamond!"

They did stand before that splendid tree—magnificent sight!

"I wonder it escaped the lumberers when they were here; they have generally pretty well weeded the forests along this chain of lakes of such fine timber as this spruce. I suppose it's at least a hundred feet high: I've seen some a hundred and forty."

"And you think lumberers have been chopping in these woods? I saw no signs of them," said Robert.

"I met with planks here and there, hewed off in squaring the timber; but even without that, you know, they're always the pioneers of the settler along every stream through Canada. This lake of yours communicates with the Ottawa, through the river at the 'Corner,' which is called 'Clyde' further on, and is far too tempting a channel for the lumberers to leave unused."

The speaker stopped at the foot of a Balm-of-Gilead fir, on the edge of the swamp, and partially cleared away the snow, revealing a tuft of cranberries, much larger and finer than they are ever seen in England.

"I noticed a bed of them here the other day. Now if you want a proof of the genial influence of the long-continued snow on vegetation, I can tell you that these cranberries—ottakas, the French Canadians call them—go on ripening through the winter under three or four feet of snow, and are much better and juicier than in October, when they are generally harvested. That cedar swamp ought to be full of them."

"I wonder can they be preserved in any way," said Robert, crushing in his lips the pleasant bitter-sweet berry. "Linda is a wonderful hand at preserves, and when she comes——"

The thought seemed to energize him to the needful preparation for that coming: he immediately made a chop at a middle-aged Weymouth pine alongside, and began to cut it down.

"Well, as to preserving the cranberries," said Mr. Holt, laughing in his slight silent way, "there's none required; they stay as fresh as when plucked for a long time. But your sister may exercise her abilities on the pailfuls of strawberries, and raspberries, and sand cherries, and wild plums, that fill the woods in summer. As to the cranberry patches, it is a curious fact that various Indian families consider themselves to have a property therein, and migrate to gather them every autumn, squaws and children and all."

"It appears that my swamp is unclaimed, then," said Robert, pausing in his blows.

"Not so with your maples," rejoined the other: "there's been a sugar camp here last spring, or I'm much mistaken."

He was looking at some old scars in the trunks of a group of maples, at the back of the Weymouth pine on which Robert was operating.

"Yes, they've been tapped sure enough; but I don't see the *loupes*—the vats in which they leave the sap to crystallize: if it were a regular Indian 'sucrerie,' we'd find those. However, I suspect you may be on the look-out for a visit from them in spring—*au temps des sucres,* as the *habitans* say."

"And I'm not to assert my superior rights at all?"

"Well, there's certainly sugar enough for both parties during your natural lives, and the Indians will sheer off when they find the ground occupied; so I'd advise you to say nothing about it. Now, Wynn, let your pine fall on that heap of brushwood; t'will save a lot of trouble afterwards; if not, you'll have to drag the head thither and chop and pile the branches, which is extra work you'd as soon avoid, I dare say."

After some judicious blows from the more experienced axe, the pine was good enough to fall just as required.

"Now the trunk must be chopped into lengths of twelve or fourteen feet;" and Mr. Holt gashed a mark with his axe at such distances, as well as he could guess. When it was done—

"What's the rate of speed of this work?" asked Robert. "It seems so slow as to be almost hopeless; the only consideration is, that one is doing it all for one's self, and—for those as dear as self," he could have added, but refrained.

"About an acre in eight or nine days, according to your expertness," was the reply. Robert did a little ciphering in his mind immediately. Three axes, plus twenty-seven days, (minus Sundays,) equal to about the chopping of ten acres and a fraction during the month of December. The calculation was somewhat reassuring.

"What curious curves there are in this Canadian axe," he remarked, as he stood leaning on the handle and looking down. "It differs essentially from the common woodman's axe at home."

"And which the English manufacturers persisted in sending us, and could not be induced to make on precisely the model required, until we dispensed with their aid by establishing an edge-tool factory of our own in Galt, on the Grand River."

"That was a declaration of independence which must have been very sensibly felt in Sheffield," remarked Robert.

They worked hard till dinner, at which period they found Arthur limping about the shanty.

"I practised those villanous snow-shoes for several hours, till I walked beautifully; but see what I've got by it," he said: "a pain across the instep as if the bones would split."

"Oh, just a touch of *mal de raquette*," observed Sam Holt, rather unsympathizingly. "I ought to have warned you not to walk too much in them at first."

"And is there no cure?" asked Arthur, somewhat sharply.

"Peter Logan would scarify your foot with a gunflint, that is, if the pain were bad enough. Do you feel as if the bones were broken, and grinding together across the instep?"

But Arthur could not confess to his experiences being so bad as this. Only a touch of the *mal de raquette*, that was all. Just a-paying for his footing in snow-shoes.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ICE-SLEDGE.

Sam Holt had long fixed the first snow as the limit of his stay. He had built his colossal shoes in order to travel as far as Greenock on them, and there take the stage, which came once a week to that boundary of civilization and the post.

Two or three days of the intensest frost intervened between the first snow and the Thursday on which the stage left Greenock. Cedar Pond was stricken dead—a solid gleaming sheet of stone from shore to shore. A hollow smothered gurgle far below was all that remained of the life of the streams; and nightly they shrank deeper, as the tremendous winter in the air forced upon them more ice, and yet more.

Notwithstanding the roaring fires kept up in the shanty chimney, the stinging cold of the night made itself felt through the unfinished walls. For want of boards, the necessary interior wainscoating had never been put up. The sight of the frozen pond suggested to Mr. Holt a plan for easily obtaining them. It was to construct an ice-boat, such as he had seen used by the Indians; to go down to the "Corner" on skates, lade the ice-boat with planks, and drive it before them back again.

Arthur, who hailed with delight any variety from the continual chopping, entered into the scheme with ardour. Robert would have liked it well enough, but he knew that two persons were quite sufficient for the business; he rather connived at the younger brother's holidays; he must abide by the axe.

One board, about nine feet long, remained from Arthur's attempts at "slabbing." This Mr. Holt split again with wedges, so as to reduce it considerably in thickness, and cut away from the breadth till it was only about twenty inches wide. The stoutest rope in the shanty stores was fastened to it fore and aft, and drawn tightly to produce a curve into boat-shape, and a couple of cross pieces of timber were nailed to the sides as a sort of balustrade and reinforcement to the rope. The ice-sledge was complete; the voyagers tied down their fur caps over their ears, strapped the dreadnought boots tightly, and launched forth.

"Throth, I donno how they do it at all at all," said Andy, who had lent his strength to the curving of the sledge, and now shook his head as he viewed them from the shore. "I'd as soon go to walk on the edges of knives as on them things they call skates. throth, betune the shoes as long as yerself for the snow, an' the shoes wid soles as sharp as a soord for the ice, our own ould brogues aren't much use to us. An' as for calling that boord a boat, I hope they won't thry it on the watlier, that's all."

As if he had discharged his conscience by this protesting soliloquy, Mr. Callaghan turned on his heel, and tramped after Robert up to the shanty.

Meanwhile, the voyagers had struck out from the natural cove formed by the junction of the creek with the pond, where were clumps of stately reeds, stiffened like steel by the frost. The cedar boughs in the swamp at the edge drooped lower than ever under their burden of snow; the stems looked inky black, from contrast. The ice-boat pushed on beautifully, with hardly any exertion, over the greyish glistening surface of the lake.

"I fancy there's a bit of breeze getting up against us," said Mr. Holt, in a momentary pause from their rapid progression.

"'Twill be in our backs coming home," suggested Arthur, as an obvious deduction.

"And if we can fix up a sail anyhow, we might press it into our service to propel the sledge," said Mr. Holt.

"Well, I never did hear of sails on dry land before," said Arthur, thereby proving his Irish antecedents; of which his quick-witted companion was not slow to remind him.

"But I don't much admire that greyish look off there," he added, becoming grave, and pointing to a hazy discolouration in the eastern skies. "I shouldn't be surprised if we had a blow to-night; and our easterly winds in winter always bring snow."

Uncle Zack was lost in admiration of the spirit which projected and executed this ice-boat voyage. "Wal, you are a knowin' shave," was his complimentary observation to Mr. Holt. "'Twar a smart idee, and no mistake. You'll only want to fix runners in front of the ice-sled goin' back, an' 'twill carry any load as easy as drinkin.' 'Spose you han't got an old pair o' skates handy? I've most remarkable good 'uns at the store, that'll cut right slick up to the Cedars in no time if tacked on to the sled. You ain't disposed to buy 'em, are you? Wal, as you be hard fixed, I don't care if I lend 'em for a trifle. Quarter dollar, say. That's dog-cheap—it's a rael ruination. Take it out in potash or maple sugar next spring—eh? Is it five cents cash you named, Mister Holt? Easy to see you never kep a backwoods store. Did anybody ever hear of anythin' so onreasonable?"

To which offer he nevertheless acceded after some grumbling; and the runners of the borrowed skates were fastened underneath the sled, by Mr. Holt's own hands and hammer. Next, that gentleman fixed a pole upright in the midst, piling the planks from the sawmill close to it, edgeways on both sides, and bracing it with a stay-rope to stem and stern. At the top ran a horizontal stick to act as yard, and upon this he girt an old blanket lent by Jackey Dubois, the corners of which were caught by cords drawn taut and fastened to the balustrade afore-mentioned.

Sam Holt had in his own brain a strong dash of the daring, and love of adventure, which tingles in the blood of youthful strength. He thoroughly enjoyed this rigging of the ice-boat, because it was strange, and paradoxical, and quite out of every-day ship building. The breeze, become stronger, was moaning in the tops of the forest as he finished; the greyish haze had thickened into well defined clouds creeping up the sky, yet hardly near enough to account for one or two flakes that came wandering down.

"Ye'll have a lively run to the Cedars, I guess," prophesied Zack, as he helped to pack in the last plank. "An' the quicker the better, for the weather looks kinder dirty. See if them runners ain't vallyable now; and only five cents cash for the loan." The queer little craft began to push ahead slowly, her sail filling out somewhat, as the wind caught in it at a curve of the shore.

Certainly the runners materially lessened the friction of the load of timber on the ice. The skaters hardly felt the weight more than in propelling the empty sledge. When they got upon the open surface of the pond, they might expect aid from the steady swelling of the sail, now fitful, as gusts swept down, snowladen, from the tree-covered banks of the stream. They hardly noticed the gradually increasing power of the wind behind them ; but the flakes in the air perceptibly thickened, even before they had reached the pond.

"Now make a straight course across for the pine point yonder," said Sam Holt, as they paused in lee shelter for an instant. "I suspect we might almost embark ourselves, Arthur, for the breeze is right upon it."

A few minutes of great velocity bore them down on the headland. They stopped for breath, the turned-up prow of their ice-boat resting even in the brush on shore. Then they coasted awhile until another wide curve of the pond spread in front.

By this time the falling snow was sufficiently dense to blur distant outlines, and an indistinct foggy whiteness took the place of the remaining daylight. Mr. Holt hesitated whether to adopt the safer and more laborious plan of following the windings of the shore, or to strike across boldly, and save a mile of meandering by one rapid push ahead. The latter was Arthur's decided choice.

"Well, here goes!" and by the guiding rope in his hand Mr. Holt turned the head of the ice-boat before the wind. They grasped the balustrades at each side firmly, and careered along with the former delightful speed. Until suddenly, Arthur was astonished to see his companion cast himself flat on the ice, bringing round the sledge with a herculean effort broadside to the breeze. A few feet in front lay a dark patch on the white plain—*a breathing-hole*

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FOREST-MAN.

DURING the momentary pause that followed the bringing up of the ice-boat broadside to the breeze, they could hear the fluctuating surge of deep waters, sucking, plunging—in that large dark patch on the ice. An instant more of such rapid progression would have sunk them in it, beyond all hope.

"Live and learn, they say," remarked Sam Holt, rising from his prostrate position beside the cargo; "and I certainly had yet to learn that breathing-holes could form at such an early period in the winter as this. We had better retrace our steps a bit, Wynn; for the ice is probably unsound for some distance about that split."

"A merciful escape," said Arthur, after they had worked their way backwards a few yards.

"Ay, and even if we could have pulled up ourselves on the brink, the sledge must have been soused to a dead certainty. Had the snow-flakes been a trifle thicker, we wouldn't have seen the hole till we were swimming, I guess. And it's well this cord of uncle Zack's was rotten, or the sail would have been too much for my pull." One of the ropes stretching the lower side of the blanket had snapped under the sudden pressure of Sam Holt's vigorous jerk round, and thereby lessened the forward force.

They made a long circuit of the deadly breathing-hole, and then ran for the nearest shore on the furthest side. The deepening layer of soft snow on the surface of the ice impeded the smooth action of the runners considerably, and made travelling laborious.

Under the lee of a promontory covered with pines they drew up to rest for a few minutes, and shake away loose snow.

"You know everything, Holt, so you can tell me why those treacherous breaks in the ice are called breathing-holes."

"I believe there's no reason to be given beyond a popular Canadian superstition that a lake needs air as well as a human being, and must have it by bursting these openings through its prison of ice. The freezing is generally uniform all over the surface at first, and after a month or so it cracks in certain spots, perhaps where there exists some eddy or cross current in the water. But evidently the hole we saw a while ago was never frozen at all. Uncle Zack would tell you it is over some dismal cavern whence issue whirlwinds and foul air."

"I think we should get on almost better without skates," said Arthur, when they had struggled a furlong further.

"We are in a drift just now," answered Mr. Holt; "the wind has heaped the snow up along here. Certainly the skates would be of more use to us further out on the pond; but I think we had better be cautious, and continue to coast;" and so they did, having the fear of other possible breathing-holes before their eyes.

How grandly roared the wind through the forest of pines with a steady persistent swelling sound, as of breakers upon an iron shore, sweeping off masses of snow wherewith to drown all landmarks in undistinguishable drifts of whiteness, and driving aslant the descending millions of flakes, till the outlines of the lake landscape were confused to the eyes which tried to trace familiar copse or headland.

Sam Holt was secretly somewhat disquieted, and watched narrowly for the cedars which denoted the Wynns' land. He would have abandoned the ice-boat but for unwillingness to risk the fruit of their day's journey. They must be near the swamp and the creek now. it was scarcely possible they could have passed without recognising the cove whence they had issued in the morning; and yet there was a chance. For the weather was extremely thick, and daylight was fading quickly: the disguise of drifts is bewildering even to the most practised eye.

"Ha! there are our cedars at last!" exclaimed Arthur. "How the snow has buried them; they look stunted. I suppose up here's the creek;" and he laid his hand beside his mouth to shout a signal to the shanty, which was smothered immediately in the greater tumult of the storm.

Mr. Holt left the grounded ice-boat, and proceeded further inland to examine the locality: returning in a few minutes, when Arthur had his skates off, with the information that this was merely a cove running in among trees, and by no means the estuary of a stream.

"Now you know, Holt, if this isn't our creek it must be our swamp, and I'm blinded and petrified on that lake. Do let us get overland to the shanty. I'm certain we would travel faster; and we can haul up the planks to-morrow or next day. You see it's getting quite dark."

"And do you think the pathless forest will be more lightsome than the open ice? No; we'd better kindle a fire, and camp out to-night. I'm pretty sure we must have passed Cedar Creek without knowing."

Arthur was already so drowsy from the excessive cold that he was only glad of the pretext for remaining still, and yielding to the uncontrollable propensity. But Mr. Holt pulled him on his feet, and commanded him to gather brushwood and sticks, while he went about himself picking birch-bark off the dead and living trees. This he spread under the brush, and ignited with his tinder box. The sight of the flame seemed to wake up Arthur with a shock from the lethargy that was stealing over his faculties. Mr. Holt had chosen a good site for his fire in the lee of a great body of pines, whose massive stems broke the wind; so the blaze quickened and prospered, till a great bed of scarlet coals and ends of fagots remained of the first relay of fuel, and another was heaped on

Now Arthur was glowing to his fingers' ends, thoroughly wide awake, and almost relishing the novelty of his lodgings for the night; with snow all around, curtaining overhead, carpeting under foot.

"Curious way they camp out in the far west," said Holt, with his arms round his knees, as he sat on their hemlock mattress and gazed into the fire, wherein all old memories seem ever to have a trysting place with fancy. And so scenes of his roving years came back to him.

"You must know that out in the Hudson's Bay territory the snow is often ten or fourteen feet deep, not only in drifts, but in smooth even layers, obliterating the country inequalities wonderfully. That's the native land of snow-shoes and of furs, where your clothes must be mainly of both for half the year. But I was going to tell you how the *voyageurs* build a fire when they have to camp out on a winter's night, and there's twelve feet of snow between them and the solid ground."

"Sheer impossibility," said Arthur, presumptuously; "the fire would work a hole down."

"You shall hear. First, they cut down a lot of trees—green timber—about twenty feet or more in length. These are laid closely parallel on the snow, which has previously been beaten to a little consistency by snow-shoes: on the platform thus made the fire is lit, and it burns away merrily."

"Don't the trees ever burn through?" asked Arthur.

"Seldom; but the heat generally works a cavity in the snow underneath, sometimes quite a chasm, seven or eight feet deep—fire above, water below. Ha! I'm glad to see my old friend the Great Bear looking through over the pines yonder. Our storm has done its worst."

"Holt, though I'm rather hungry and sleepy, I'm heartily glad of this night's outing, for one reason: you won't be able to leave us to-morrow, and so are booked for another week, old fellow."

It seemed irrevocably the case; and under this conviction Arthur rolled himself in the blanket (cut from the spar of the ice-boat), and went into dreamland straight from his brushwood bed, Mr. Holt continuing to sit by the fire gazing into it as before; which sort of gazing, experienced people say, is very bad for the eyes. Perhaps it was that which caused a certain moisture to swell into most visible bright drops, filling the calm grey orbs with unspeakable sadness for a little while. The Great Bear climbed higher round the icy pole; the sky had ceased to snow before the absorbed thinker by the fire noticed the change of weather. Then he rose gently, laid further wood on the blazing pile, threw brush about Arthur's feet and body for additional warmth, and, skates in hand, went down to the lake to explore.

On reaching the point of the headland, he looked round. The weather was much clearer; but westwards a glimmering sheen of ice—black land stretching along, black islands, snow-crowned, rising midway afar. Eastward, ha! that is what should have been done hours ago. A fire burned on the edge of the woods at some distance. So they had really passed Cedar Creek unawares, as he suspected from the nature of the ground and trees.

While Robert and Andy crouched by their fire, feeding it up to full blaze with the most resinous wood they could find, the distant shout of the coming travellers gladdened their ears. The servant flung his whole stock of balsam on the beacon at once, causing a most portentous flame-burst, and sprang up with a wild "hurroo!" wielding one half-burnt faggot *à la* shillelah about his head.

"Oh, then, Mister Robert achora, it's yerself is the janius; an' to think of mekin' a lighthouse to guide 'em wid, an' here they are safe home by the manes of it. But now, sir, if ye'll take my advice, as we're always lost when we goes anywhere by ourselves, we ought niver part for the futhur, an' thin we'll all go asthray together safe an' sound."

"Let's warm ourselves at this glorious fire before we go up to the shanty," said Arthur, stretching out his feet to the fire. "Pity to let it waste its sweetness on the desert air."

So they stood explaining matters by the fire for a few minutes, till Andy, who was never tired of heaping on fresh fuel, came forward with an armful and a puzzled face.

"Mr. Holt, there's somethin' quare in that three, sir, which has a big hole in it full of dhry sticks an' brush, an there's somethin' woolly inside, sir, that I felt wid me two hands; an' more be token it's a big baste whatever it is."

"A bear, probably," said Mr. Holt, as he warmed the sole of one foot. "Better let him alone till morning, and tuck in his bedclothes again for to-night, poor fellow." But Arthur had started up to investigate, and must pull the black fleece for his personal satisfaction.

"Oh, throth he's stirrin' now!" exclaimed Andy, who had begun to cram the orifice with the former stuffing of dried bough and brush. "We've woke him up, Masther Arthur, if it's asleep he was at all, the rogue; an' now he's sthrugglin' out of the hole wid all his might. Keep in there, you big villyan, you don't dare to offer to come out;" for Andy set his shoulder against the great carcass, which nevertheless sheered round till muzzle and paws could be brought into action, and their use illustrated on Andy's person.

"Och murther!" roared the sufferer; "he has his arms round me, the baste; he's squeezin' me into m—m—mash!"

A blazing stick, drawn from the fire by Mr. Holt's hand, here struck the bear's nose and eyes; which, conjoined with Andy's own powerful wrenching, caused him to loosen his hold, and a ball from the rifle which Robert had fortunately brought down as the companion of their night-watch, finished his career.

"Well done, Bob!" when, after a run of thirty yards or so, they stood beside the prostrate enemy; "you've won our first bearskin. Now we shall see what the paws are like, in the way of eatables: don't you say they're delicious, Holt?"

Borne upon two strong poles, the bear made his way up to the shanty, and was housed for the rest of the night. Poor Andy was found to be severely scratched by the long sharp claws. "Sure I'm glad 'twas none of yerselves he tuk to huggin'," said the faithful fellow; "an' scrapin' as if 'twas a pratie he wanted to peel!"

He had his revenge on the fore-paws next morning when Mr. Holt cut them off, some time before breakfast, and set them in a mound of hot ashes to bake, surrounding and crowning them further with live coals. Bruin himself was dragged outside into the snow, preparatory to the operation of skinning and cutting up into joints of excellent meat.

"Do you know, I saw an amazing resemblance to a fur-coated man, as he stood up last night before Robert's shot," said Arthur.

"You're not the first to see it," replied Holt. "The Indians call him 'the forest-man,' and the Lower Canadians the 'bourgeois;' they attribute to him a sagacity almost human; the Crees and Ojibbeways fancy him an enchanted being, and will enter into conversation with him when they meet in the woods."

"Yet they take an unfair advantage of his paws."

"That's true: my cookery must be almost done." And he re-entered the hut to dish up his dainty. "Come, who'll feast with me?"

"Appearances are much against them," said Robert, eyeing the charcoal-looking paws, which presented soles uppermost on the trencher. Mr. Holt scooped out a portion on to his own plate, and used no further persuasion.

"'Twould never do not to know the taste of bear's paw," said Arthur, as if winding himself up to the effort of picking a small bit. Mr. Holt was amused to see the expression of enlightened satisfaction that grew on his face. "Oh, Bob, 'tis really capital. That's only a prejudice about its black look," helping himself again. "The Indians aren't far removed from epicures, when this is their pet dish."

"Well," observed Mr. Holt, filling his horn cup with tea from the kettle, "they equally relish fried porcupines and skunks; but some of their viands might tempt an alderman—such as elk's nose, beaver's tail, and buffalo's hump."

"Holt," said Arthur, scooping the paw a third time. "it seemed to me that chap had fixed himself in a hole barely big enough, to judge by tne way he wriggled out."

"Very likely. 'Bears are the knowingest varmint in all creation,' as uncle Zack would say. They sometimes watch for days before entering a tree, and then choose the smallest opening possible, for warmth's sake, and scrape up brush and moss to conceal themselves. I've known the hollow tree to be such a tight fit that the hunters were compelled to cut it open to get at the bear after he was shot. I suspect the heat of our fire had roused this one, even before Andy pulled away the brush, or he wouldn't ha' been so lively."

"What's the meat like, Holt? I hope it don't taste carnivorous."

"You'll hardly know it from beef, except that the shorter grain makes it tenderer; for the bear lives on the best products of the forest. He'll sit on his haunches before a serviceberry tree, bend the branches with his paws, and eat off the red fruit wholesale. He'll grub with his claws for the bear potatoes, and chew them like tobacco. He'll pick the kernels out of nuts, and help himself to your maize and fall wheat, when you have them, as well as to your sucking pigs and yearly calves."

"Then we may fairly eat him in return," said Robert; "but I'll leave the paws to you and Arthur."

"Thank you for the monopoly. Now these knives are sufficiently sharp." Sam Holt had been putting an edge on them at the grindstone during his talk. "Come and have your lesson in fur-making, for I must be off."

"Off! oh, nonsense; not to-day," exclaimed both. But he was quite unpersuadeable when once his plan was fixed. He took the stage at Greenock that afternoon.

CHAPTER XXII.

SILVER SLEIGH-BELLS.

The shanty was ere long lined in a comely manner with the planks which had journeyed up the pond in the ice-boat, affording many an evening's work for Arthur. About Christmas all was right and tight.

Now, to those who have any regrets or sadnesses in the background of memory, the painfullest of all times are these anniversaries. One is forced round face to face with the past and the unalterable, to gaze on it, perchance, through blinding tears. The days return—unchanged: but, oh, to what changed hearts!

Were they not thinking of the Canadian exiles to-day, at home, at dear old Dunore? For nothing better than exiles did the young men feel themselves, this snow-white Christmas morning, in the log-hut among the backwoods, without a friendly face to smile a greeting, except poor Andy's; and his was regretful and wistful enough too.

"I say, Bob, what shall we do with ourselves? I'm sure I wish I didn't know 'twas Christmas day at all. It makes a fellow feel queer and nonsensical—homesick, I suppose they call it—and all that sort of thing. I vote we obliterate the fact, by chopping as hard as any other day."

So, after reading the chapters for the day, (how the words brought up a picture of the wee country church in Ireland, with its congregation of a dozen, its whitewashed walls and blindless lancet windows!) they went forth to try that relief for all pains of memory—steady hard work. The ten acres allotted for December were nearly chopped through by this time, opening a considerable space in front of the shanty, and beginning to reveal the fair landscape of lake and wooded slopes that lay beyond. The felled trees lay piled in wind rows and plan heaps so far as was possible without the help of oxen to move the huge logs; snow covered them pretty deeply smoothing all unsightliness for the present.

"How I long to have something done towards the building of our house," said Robert, pausing after the fall of a hemlock spruce, while Arthur attacked the upper branches. "I'd like so much to have it neatly finished before my father and mother and Linda come, next summer."

"Well, haven't you no end of shingles made for the roof?" said the other, balancing his axe for a blow. "You're working at them perpetually; and Andy isn't a bad hand either at wooden slates, as he calls them."

"We must have a raising-bee in spring," concluded Robert, after some rumination—"as soon as the snow melts a little. Really, only for such co-operative working in this thinly peopled country, nothing large could be ever effected. Bees were a great device, whoever invented them."

"By the way," said Arthur presently, returning from chopping apart the trunk into two lengths of fifteen feet, "did you hear that the Scotchman between us and the 'Corner,' at Daisy Burn, wants to sell his farm and improvements, and is pushing out into the wild land further up the pond? Nim told me yesterday. He expects three pounds sterling an acre, including fixtures, and he got the ground for nothing; so that's doubling one's capital, I imagine."

"How for nothing?"

"It was before a human being had settled in these townships, and the concession lines were only just blazed off by the surveyors. Davison obtained a grant of land on condition of performing what are called settlement duties, which means chopping out and clearing the concession lines for a certain distance. Of course that was another way of payment, by labour instead of cash. But on swearing that it was done, he obtained what Nim calls a 'lift, a crown patent, we should say, and the land was his estate for ever."

"I wish we could transfer a couple of his fenced fields here," said Robert, "and his young orchard. We must have some sort of a garden, Arthur, before Linda comes."

"Yes, she never could get on without her flower beds. I say, Bob, won't Cedar Creek look awfully wild to them?"

They worked on awhile both thinking of that. Any one accustomed to smooth enclosed countries, with regular roads and houses at short distances, would indeed find the backwoods "awfully wild." And that most gentle mother, how would she bear the transplanting?

"I had a very misty idea of what bush-life was, I own, till I found myself in it," quoth Robert, after a long silence, broken only by the ring of the axes.

"Living like a labourer at home, but without half his comforts," said Arthur, piling the boughs. "Tell you what, Bob, we wouldn't be seen doing the things we do here. Suppose Sir Richard Lacy or Lord Scutcheon saw us in our present trim?"

"But you know that's all false pride," said Robert, with a little glow on his cheek nevertheless. "We shouldn't be ashamed of anything but wrong."

"Say what you will, Bob, it strikes me that we aren't of the class which do best in Canada. The men of hard hands, labouring men and women, are those who will conquer the forest and gain wealth here."

"Well, if that be the rule, you and I must strive to be the exception," said Robert; "for I'm determined to have a comfortable homestead for the dear old people from Dunore, and I'm equally determined to set my mark on Canadian soil, and to prosper, if it be God's will."

He lifted off his cap for a moment, looking at the serene sky. The rising discontent in his brother's heart was stilled by the gesture. Both worked assiduously, till Andy, with an unusual twinkle in his eyes, summoned them to dinner.

"What has the fellow been about, I wonder? I know 'twasn't respect for the holiday kept him in doors all the morning."

It was presently explained. Andy, ignorant of courses, dished up, together with the ham, a very fine dumpling emitting the odour of apples.

"Sure, as ye can't have yer own plum puddin' in this outlandish counthry, ye can have a thing the same shape, anyhow. Mrs. Jackey showed me how to make it iligant, of the string of dried bits I had thrun in the box since we kem here first. Throth an' I'm cur'ous to see did they iver swell out agin, afther the parchin' they got."

But for a slightly peculiar taste in the sweet, the dumpling was unimpeachable.

"I suppose Mrs. Jackey uses maple sugar in her confectionery," said Robert; "a *soupçon* of trees runs through it."

Late in the evening, as the pitch-pine logs were flaring abundance of light through the cabin—light upon Robert at his shingles, and upon Arthur at his work-bench, and upon Andy shaving and packing the slips of white pine as fast as his master split them, with a stinging night outside, some twenty-five degrees below zero, and the snow crusted at top hard enough to bear anything—all three raised their heads to listen to some approaching sound through the dead silence of the frozen air. It was a very distant vagrant tinkling, as of sheep bells on a common in old Europe; they looked at one another, and Andy crossed himself reverently.

"Like chapel bells over the say from poor Ireland," he muttered; and crept to the door, which Robert had opened. "Sure there isn't fairies all the ways out here? an' 'tis mighty like it——"

"Hush—h—!" Andy crossed himself again as the tinkling became more plainly audible. A sweetly plaintive jangling it seemed—a tangled careless music: nearer, and still nearer it came.

"What a fool I am!" exclaimed Robert: "it must be sleigh-bells. Travellers, I suppose."

And before many minutes were past the sleigh had rounded its way among the stumps, over the smooth snow, to the shanty door, filled with brilliant wood-light.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"STILL-HUNTING."

From the buffalo robes of the sleigh emerged a gentleman so wrapt in lynx-furs and bearskin, that, until his face stood revealed by the firelight, nothing but his voice was recognisable by the Wynns.

"Argent! is it possible?"

"Most possible; didn't you remember that my regiment was quartered out here? But I'm sure it is a very unexpected pleasure to meet you in the bush, old fellow:" and they shook hands warmly again. "For though I heard from my mother that you had gone to settle in Canada, she didn't mention the locality, and I've been inquiring about you in all directions without success; until, as good fortune would have it, I stopped at the odious Yankee tavern yonder this evening, and overheard a fellow in the bar mention your name. You may imagine I seized him, and ascertained particulars—harnessed the sleigh again, and started off up here, to ask you for a night's lodging, which means, a rug before the fire."

His servant had been unloading the sleigh of knapsacks and rifles, and other hunting gear. Captain Argent gave him a few directions, and presently the silver-sounding bells tinkled swiftly away along the concession road, and back to the "Corner" again.

"Och sure," quoth Andy to himself, was he itnessed from among his shingles the reunion of the old acquaintances; "what a house for him to come into—not as big as the butler's bedroom at Scutcheon Castle—an' nothin' but pork an' bear's mate to give the likes of a gran' gintleman like him: I wish he'd sted at home, so I do. Oh, Misther Robert asthore, if I ever thought to see the family so reduced; an' sure I was hopin' nobody would know it but ourselves—leastways, none of the quality at home."

Andy's soliloquy was interrupted by a summons from his master to prepare supper; but the under-current of his thoughts went on, as he set about his cooking.

"An' to have to be fryin' mate ondher his very nose, an' the kitchen in the castle is a good quarther of a mile from the dinin' parlour, anyhow; an' all our chaney is made of wood, barrin' the couple of plates; an' our glasses is nothin' but cows' horns. An' sorra a bit of a table cloth, unless I spread one of the sheets. An' to sit on shtools for want of chairs. An' to sleep on the flure like meself. Arrah, what brought him here at all?"

The subject of these reflections had meanwhile lighted his silver-mounted meerschaum, and was puffing contentedly in the intervals of animated chat, apparently quite satisfied with his position and prospective hardships, not giving a thought to the humble accommodations of his friends' shanty; which, on his first entrance, had contracted, in Robert's vision, into a mere woodcutter's hut, devoid of every elegance and most of the comforts of civilized life: he imagined that thus it would be seen through Argent's eyes. But if it was so, Argent neither by look nor manner gave token of the least thought of the sort.

He was the youngest son of a poor peer, Lord Scutcheon, living in the neighbourhood of Dunore; and often had the Wynns ridden with him at the same meet, and shouldered fowling-pieces in the same sporting party.

"But picking off pheasants in a preserve is tame work to the noble game one can shoot in these forests," said he. "I'm bound at present on a 'still-hunting' expedition; which doesn't mean looking out for illegal distilleries, as it might signify in Ireland, ha, ha!"

Captain Argent had very high animal spirits, and a small joke sufficed to wake them into buoyant laughter, which was infectious by its very abundance.

"Deer-stalking is the right word; I've done it in Scotland, but now I mean to try my hand on the moose—grandest of American ruminants. I've engaged an old trapper to come with me for a few days into their haunts. Now, 'twould be a delightful party if you two would join. What do you say, Wynn? Come, lay by your axe, and recreate yourself for a week, man."

Arthur looked a very decided acceptance of the proposition, but Robert shook his head. "Couldn't leave the place," said he, smiling: "too much to be done."

"Nonsense; the trees will stand till your return, and you can't plough through four feet of snow."

"If I was far enough advanced to have land fit for ploughing, nothing could be pleasanter than to join you, Argent; but unfortunately no end of trees have to be cut down, and logged in heaps for burning before then. But, Arthur, wouldn't you go?"

His faint opposition, because he did not like to leave his brother, was easily overcome. Captain Argent made another attack upon Robert's resolve. "People always consider winter the time for amusement in Canada. Nature gives a tolerably good hint to the same effect, by blocking up the rivers so that ships can't sail, and snowing up the farms, so that the ground isn't seen for months; and if that isn't a licence for relaxation——"

"I suspect that in the earlier stages of bush-life there are no holidays," replied Robert: "if you just reflect that everything in the way of civilization has to be done afresh from the beginning, pretty much like living on a desert island. Now I've got a house to build by summer time, and here are all the preparations towards it as yet;" and he pointed to the shingles.

"Why, thin, I'd like to know for what Misther Robert is dhrawin' up the poverty of the family, an' makin' little of himself before the captain," thought Andy, angrily, and betraying the feeling by a bang of the fryingpan as he laid it aside. "Can't he talk to him of sojers, or guns, or wild bastes, or somethin' ginteel of that kind, an' not be makin' a poor mouth, as if he hadn't a single hap'ny." Andy was relieved when the conversation veered round to a consideration of Canada as military quarters.

"About the pleasantest going," was the Hon. Captain Argent s opinion. "Of course I can't exactly make out why we're sent here, unless to stave off the Yankees, which it seems to me the colonists are sufficiently inclined and sufficiently able to do themselves; neither can I imagine why Joe Hume and his school of economists submit to such expense without gaining anything in return, save the honour and glory of calling Canada our colony. But, leaving that matter to wiser heads than mine, I can say for myself that I like the quarters greatly, and am inclined to agree with Canadian eulogists, that it is the finest country in the world—barring our own little islands."

"I don't feel, though, as if it ever could be *home*," observed Robert, who had taken to his shingles again.

"Perhaps not; but we military men have an essentially homeless profession, you know."

"The redcoats in Montreal and Quebec seemed a visible link with mother country, most welcome to my eyes in the new land; and so, Argent, when you're commander-in-chief, do continue the regiments in Canada, for my sake."

"But, my dear fellow," said the officer, quite seriously, as he struck the ashes from his pipe, "it is waste of the most expensive manufactured material on earth, the British soldier. When he's within reach of the States, he deserts by whole pickets, ready armed and accoutred to the Yankees' hands: I've had the pleasant job of pursuing the chaps myself, and being baulked by the frontier

It's the garrison duty they detest; and an unlimited licence beckons them over the border."

"And you think," said Robert, "the colonists are sufficiently loyal, and all that, to be left to themselves?"

"I don't think they would join the States, at all events. What a horrid set those Yankees are! Canadians are too respectable to wish to sail in the same ship with them." This truly cogent argument was followed by a series of profound whiffs. "And if they did," added Captain Argent presently, "we've been building the strongest fortifications in the world, spending millions at Halifax and Quebec and other places, on fosses, and casemates, and bomb-proof towers, just for the Yankees! And I suppose that Barrack Hill in the middle of Bytown will be made into another Acropolis for the same end."

"Ah," said Robert, shaving his shingle attentively, "so long as Canadians look back to England as home, and speak of it as home, there's little fear of annexation or revolt. Mother country has only to keep up the motherly relation, and patiently loosen the leading strings, according as her colonies grow able to run alone."

"That sentiment might fall from the lips of a colonial secretary in his place in the Commons. By the way, did you hear that my brother Percy has been returned member for the county, at home?"

"No; we have not seen a newspaper since we left, except a shabby little Canadian print, which gives half a dozen lines to the English mail. Tell us about it, Argent. Was there a contest?"

How intensely interesting were the particulars, and how Robert and Arthur did devour the ill-printed provincial news-sheet issuing from the obscure Irish country town, and burning all through with political partizanship! Luckily Argent had the last received copy in his pocket, which detailed all the gossip of the election, with the familiar names and localities of the struggle.

Looking back half a lifetime seemed to be concentrated in the months since they had left Europe. Things widely different from all past experience had filled their thoughts to overflowing, and drowned out old sympathies, till this evening vivified them afresh. Yet Robert felt, with a sort of little pain, that they must gradually die away, be detached, and fall off from his life. His logs and shingles, his beaver meadow and water privilege, were more to him now than all the political movements which might shake Ireland to its centre.

Long after Argent's short athletic figure, crowned with fair curls, lay fast asleep on his buffalo rugs, enjoying hunters' repose, the brothers sat talking and musing. It was not the first time that Robert had to reason down Arthur's restless spirit, if he could. This rencontre had roused it again. He was not satisfied with the monotonous life of the backwoods. He envied Argent, rather, who could make pleasure his pursuit, if he chose.

They set off for the hunting grounds with sunrise next morning; the experienced Ina Moose, a half-bred trapper, marching in advance of the sledge. First, he had stored in the shanty the jingling strings of bells, without consulting their owner: he had a constitutional antipathy to noise of all sorts, and could see no especial good in warning the game.

"What an erect fellow he is, and as taciturn as a mole," quoth the lively Argent. "I hope we shall meet with some of his step-relations, the Indians; I've quite a passion for savage life, that is, to look at. Last winter's leave I made some excursions on Lake Simcoe; the islands there are all savage territory, belonging to the Ojibbeways. Poor fellows, they're dying out—every year becoming fewer: yet one can discern the relics of a magnificent race. Red cunning has been no match for white wisdom, that's certain."

Arthur was a willing listener to many stories about his friend's excursions; and so the time was wiled away as they drove deeper into the recesses of the forest, even to the extreme end of all concession lines.

Here was Ina's wigwam, on the edge of a small pond, which was closely hedged in with pines. Wasting no words, he merely stepped back to unbuckle the shaggy pony, and at the ensuing noonday meal Arthur for the first time tasted the wilderness preserve called "pemmican." It was not unlike what housewives at home denominate "collar," he thought, cutting in compact slices of interwoven fat and lean.

"How is it made, Argent?"

"I believe the dried venison is pounded between stones till the fibres separate, and in that powdery state is mixed with hot melted buffalo's fat, and sewed up in bags of skin. They say it is most nutritive—a pound equal to four pounds of ordinary meat. A sort of concentrated nourishment, you see."

"What are those blackish things hanging up in the smoke, I wonder?"

"Beavers' tails, captured in the creeks off the lake, I suppose: capital food, tasting like bacon, but a little gristly."

"And does the fellow live here, all alone?" A quick and perhaps unfriendly glance of Ina's black eyes proved that he was not deaf, though by choice dumb.

"Well, I suppose so, this year; but he's a great rover. Was with me on the Simcoe last year. I never met such a lover of the chase for its own sake. His forefathers' instincts are rampant in him. Ina, have we any chance of a moose?"

The trapper shook his grisly head. "Only on the hard wood ridges all winter," he answered; they 'yard' whar maples grows, for they live on the tops and bark. Bariboos come down here, mostly."

What these were, Arthur had soon an opportunity of knowing. Ina kindled into a different being when the hunting instinct came over him. Every sense was on the alert.

The hunters had drawn white shirts over their clothes, to disguise their approach through the snow from the far-seeing deer which they were to stalk. They proceeded some distance before meeting with game. What intense and inexpressible stillness through the grand woods! Arthur started, and almost exclaimed, when, from a pine tree close to him, issued a report sharp as a pistol shot. It was only the violent contraction of the wood from the severe frost, as he knew in a moment; and the deer browsing yonder on branch tops never winced, though a whisper or a footfall would have sent them bounding away. Presently the crack of Argent's rifle was followed by the spring of a buck high into the air, all four feet together, poor animal, as the death-pang pierced his heart.

"I thought I never should get fair aim, from the way he was protected by trees," said the sportsman, reloading with satisfaction. "And it's cruel to maim a creature, you know;" whence the reader may perceive that Captain Argent was humane.

"Holloa! what's this?" said Arthur, nearly stumbling over a huge pair of antlers.

"Moose," replied Ina, laconically, as he glanced upwards to see whether the maple twigs had been nipped short.

"He must have been a trifle lighter for the loss of these," observed Arthur, lifting them. Nearly six feet across, and half-a-hundred weight, if an ounce. I'm curious to see the animal that can carry them composedly."

"The largest beast on the continent," said Argent. But much as they searched, the shed antlers were all they saw of moose for that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LUMBERERS.

Scene, early morning; the sun pouring clear light over the snowy world, and upon Captain Argent in front of the hut, just emerged from his blankets and rugs.

"Why, Arthur, here's an elk walking up to the very hall door!"

Almost at the same minute Ina appeared among the distant trees, and fired. He had gone off on snow-shoes long before daybreak, to run down the moose he knew to be in the neighbourhood, had wounded a fine bull, and driven him towards his camp.

"Why didn't you finish him off on the spot," asked Arthur, "instead of taking all that trouble?"

"No cart to send for the flesh," replied Ina, significantly.

There might be a thousand pounds of that, covered with long coarse hair, and crested with the ponderous antlers. A hunch on the shoulders seemed arranged as a cushion support to these last; and in the living specimens seen afterwards by Arthur, they carried the huge horns laid back horizontally, as they marched at a long trot, nose in the air, and large sharp eyes looking out on all sides.

"It was a sharp idea to make the elk his own butcher's boy," quoth Argent.

The massive thick lips formed the "mouffle," prized in the wilderness as a dainty: Arthur would have been ashamed to state his preference for a civilized mutton chop. Other elks shared the fate of this first; though it seemed a wanton waste of Nature's bounties to slay the noble animals merely for their skins, noses, and tongues. Ina was callous, for he knew that thus perished multitudes every year in Canada West, and thousands of buffaloes in the Hudson's Bay territory. Arthur could not help recalling little Jay; and many a time her lesson kept his rifle silent, and spared a wound or a life.

One day, while stalking wild turkeys, creeping cautiously from tree to tree, an unwonted sound dissipated their calculations. Coming out on a ridge whence the woods swept down to one of the endless ponds, they heard distant noises as of men and horses drawing a heavy load.

"Lumberers," explained Ina, pricking his ears. He would have immediately turned in a contrary direction; but the prospect of seeing a new phase of life was a strong temptation to Captain Argent, so they went forward towards a smoke that curled above a knot of pines.

It proceeded from the lumber shanty: a long, windowless log-hut, with a door at one end, a perpetual fire in the centre, on a large open hearth of stones; the chimney, a hole in the roof. Along both sides and the further end was a sort of dais, or low platform of unhewn trees laid close together, and supporting the "bunks," or general bed, of spruce boughs and blankets. Pots slung in the smoke and blaze were bubbling merrily, under presidence of a red night-capped French Canadian, who acted as cook, and was as civil, after the manner of his race, as if the new arrivals were expected guests.

"Ah, bon-jour, Messieurs; vous êtes les bienvenus. Oui, monsieur—sans doute ce sont des gens de chantier. Dey vork in forest," he added, with a wave of his hand—plunging into English. "Nous sommes tous les gens de chantier—vat you call hommes de lumbare: mais pour moi, je suis chef de cuisine pour le présent:" and a conversation ensued with Argent, in which Arthur made out little more than an occasional word of the Canadian's—with ease when it was so Anglican as "le foreman."

"What a good-looking, merry-faced chap he is," observed Arthur, when the red nightcap had been pulled off in an obeisance of adieu, as they went to seek for the others, and witness their disforesting operations.

"French Canadians are generally the personifications of good humour and liveliness," returned Argent; "the pleasantest possible servants and the best voyagers. Listen to him now, carolling a 'chanson' as he manages his smutty cookery. That's the way they sing at everything."

"So the lumberers have a foreman?"

"Curious how the French can't invent words expressive of such things, but must adopt ours. He tells me 'le foreman's' duty is to distribute the work properly, allotting to each gang its portion; and also to make a report of conduct to the overseer at the end of the season, for which purpose he keeps a journal of events. I had no idea there was so much organization among them; and it seems the gangs have regular duties—one to fell, one to hew, one to draw to the water's edge with oxen; and each gang has a head-man directing its labours."

Nearing the sound of the axes, they came to where a group of lumber-men were cutting down some tall spruce-firs, having first laid across over the snow a series of logs, called "bedding timbers," in the line that each tree would fall. One giant pine slowly swayed downwards, and finally crashed its full length on the prepared sleepers, just as the strangers approached. Immediately on its fall, the "liner" commenced to chop away the bark for a few inches wide all along the trunk, before marking with charcoal where the axes were to hew, in squaring the timber; meantime another man was lopping the top off the tree, and a third cutting a sort of rough mortise-hole at the base, which he afterwards repeated at the upper end.

So busy were the whole party, that the hewer, a genuine Paddy, who stood leaning on his broad axe until the timber was ready for him, was the first to raise his eyes and notice the new comers. Arthur asked him what the holes were for.

"Why, then, to raft the trees together when we get 'em into the water," was his reply; and in the same breath he jumped on to the trunk, and commenced to notch with his axe as fast as possible along the sides, about two feet apart. Another of his gang followed, splitting off the blocks between the deep notches into the line mark. And this operation, repeated for the four sides, squared the pine into such a beam as we see piled in our English timber yards.

What was Arthur's surprise to recognise, in the mass of lumberers gathered round a huge mast, the Milesian countenance of

Murty Keefe, a discontented emigrant with whom he had picked up a casual acquaintance on the steamboat which took him to Montreal. He was dressing away the knots near the top with his axe, as though he had been used to the implement all his life. When, after infinite trouble and shouting in all tongues, the half-dozen span of strong patient oxen were set in motion, dragging the seventy-feet length of timber along the snow towards the lake, Arthur contrived to get near enough to his countryman for audible speech. Murty's exaggerated expectations had suffered a grievous eclipse; still, if he became an expert hewer, he might look forward to earning more than a curate's salary by his axe. And they were well fed: he had more meat in a week now than in a twelvemonth in Ireland. He was one of half-a-dozen Irishmen in this lumberers' party of French Canadians, headed by a Scotch foreman; for through Canada, where address and administrative ability are required, it is found that Scotchmen work themselves into the highest posts.

During the rude but abundant dinner which followed, this head of the gang gave Argent some further bits of information about the lumber trade.

"We don't go about at random, and fell trees where we like," said he. "We've got a double tax to pay: first, ground rent per acre per annum for a licence, and then a duty of a cent for every cubic foot of timber we bring to market. Then, lest we should take land and not work it, we are compelled to produce a certain quantity of wood from every acre of forest we rent, under pain of forfeiting our licence."

"And will you not have it all cut down some day? Then what is the country to do for fuel and the world for ships?"

The foreman rubbed his rusty beard with a laugh.

"There's hundreds of years of lumbering in the Bytown district alone," said he; "why, sir, it alone comprehends sixty thousand square miles of forest."

CHAPTER XXV.

CHILDREN OF THE FOREST.

THERE could hardly be a wider contrast than between Captain Argent's usual dinner at his regimental mess, and that of which he now partook in the lumbermen's shanty. Tables and chairs were as unknown as forks and dishes among the *gens de chantier ;* a large pot of tea, dipt into by everybody's pannikin, served for beer and wine; pork was the *pièce de résistance,* and tobacco smoking the dessert; during all of which a Babel of tongues went on in French patois, intermingled with an occasional remark in Irish or Scottish brogue.

"Your men seem to be temperance folk," observed Argent to the foreman.

"Weel, they must be," was the laconic reply. "We've no stores where they could get brandy-smash in the bush, and it's so much the better for them, or I daursay they wad want prisons and juries next. As it is, they're weel behaved lads eneugh."

"I'm sure it must be good in a moral point of view; but do you find them equal to as much work as if they had beer or spirits?" asked Captain Argent. "And lumbering seems to me to be particularly laborious."

"Weel, there's a fact I'll mak a present to the teetotallers," answered the foreman. "Our lumberers get nothing in the way of stimulant, and they don't seem to want it. When I came fresh from the auld country, I couldna hardly b'lieve that."

"Au large, au large!"

At this word of command all hands turned out of the shanty, and went back to work in their several gangs. Again the fellers attacked the hugest pines; the hewers sprang upon the fallen, lining and squaring the living trees into dead beams; and the teamsters yoked afresh their patient oxen, fitting upon each massive throat the heavy wooden collar, and attaching to chains the ponderous log which should be moved towards the water-highway.

Argent and Arthur found themselves presently at the foot of a colossal Weymouth or white pine, the trunk and top of which were almost as disproportionate as a pillar supporting a paint-brush, but which the Scottish foreman admired enthusiastically, considering it in the abstract as "a stick," and with reference to its future career in the shape of a mast. All due preparation had been made for its reception upon level earth; a road twenty feet wide cut through the forest, that it and half a dozen brother pines of like calibre in the neighbourhood might travel easily and safely to the water's edge; and forty yards of bedding timbers, lay, a ready-made couch, for its great length.

"I daursay, now, that stick's standing aboot a thousand years: I've counted fourteen hunder rings in the wood of a pine no much bigger. Ou, 'twill mak a gran' mast for a seventy-four—nigh a hunder feet lang, and as straight as a rod."

Stripping off the bark and dressing the knots was the next work, which would complete its readiness for Devonport dockyards, or perchance for the Cherbourg shipwrights. During this operation, the foreman made an excursion to visit his other gangs, and then took his visitors a little aside into the woods to view what he termed a "regular take-in." It was a group of fine-looking pines, wearing all the outward semblance of health, but when examined, proving mere tubes of bark, charred and blackened within, and ragged along the seam where the fire had burst out.

"How extraordinary!" said Argent. "Why were they not burned equally through?"

"I hae been thinking the fire caught them in the spring, when the sap rins strong; so the sap-wood saved thae shells, to misguide the puir axmen. I thought I had a fair couple o' cribs o' lumber a' ready to hand, when I spied the holes, and found my fine pines naething but empty pipes."

He had been fashioning two saplings into strong handspikes, and now offered one each to the gentlemen. "Ye'll no be too proud to bear a hand wi' the mast aboon: it'll be a kittle job lugging it to the pond; so just lend us a shove now and then."

The great mass was at last got into motion, by a difficult concerted starting of all the oxen at the same moment.

Round the brilliant log fire, while pannikins of tea circulated, and some flakes of the falling snow outside came fluttering down into the blaze, the lumberers lay on their bunks, or sat on blocks, talking, sleeping, singing, as the mood moved. French Canadians are native-born songsters; and their simple ballad melodies, full of *réfrain* and repetition, sounded very pleasing even to Argent's amateur ears.

I can imagine that this shanty life must be pleasant enough," said Argent, rolling himself in his buffalo robe preparatory to sleep by the fire.

"I'll just tell ye what it is," returned the foreman; "nane that has gane lumbering can tak' kindly to ony ither calling. They hae caught the wandering instinct, and the free life o' the woods becomes a needcessity, if I might say sae. D'ye ken the greatest trouble I find in towns? Trying to sleep on a civilized bed. I canna do't, that's the fact; nor be sitting to civilized dinners, whar the misguided folk spend thrice the time that's needfu', fiddling with a fork an' spune. I like to eat an' be done wi' it."

Which little social trait was of a piece with Mr. Foreman's energy and promptness in all the circumstances of life. In a very few minutes from the aforesaid speech he was sound asleep, for he was determined to waste no time in accomplishing that either.

Argent and Arthur left this wood-cutting polity next morning, and worked, or rather hunted their way back to the settled districts. The former stayed for another idle week at Cedar Creek; and then the brothers were again alone, to pursue their strife with the forest.

It went on, with varying success, till "the moon of the snow crust," as the Ojibbeways poetically style March. A chaos of fallen trunks and piled logs lay for twenty-five acres about the little shanty; Robert was beginning to understand why the French Canadians called a cleared patch "un désert," for beyond doubt the axe had a desolating result, in its present stage.

"Why, then, Masther Robert, there's one thing I wanted to ax you," said Andy, resting a moment from his chopping: "it's goin' on four months now since we see a speck of green, an' will the snow ever be off the ground agin, at all at all?"

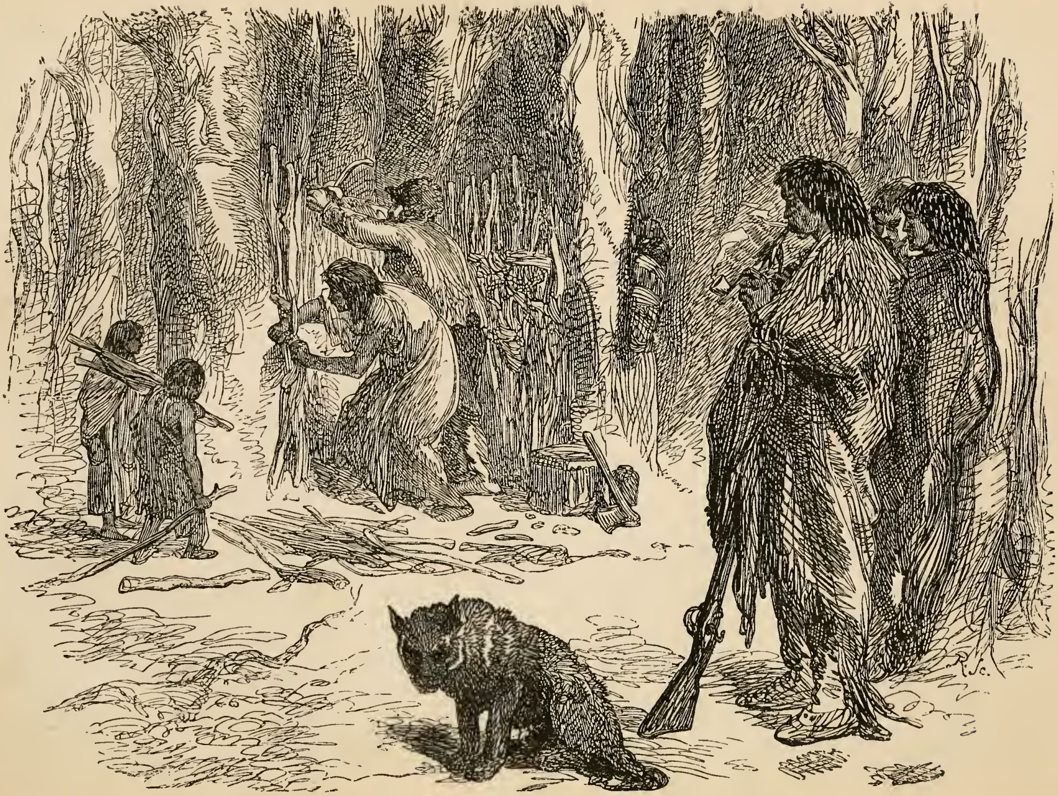
"You see the sun is only just getting power enough to melt it," returned his master, tracing with his axe-head a furrow in the thawing surface.

"But sure if it always freezes up tight agin every evening', that little taste of meltin' won't do much good," observed Andy. "Throth, I'm fairly longin' to see that lake turn into wather, instead ov bein' as hard as iron. Sure the fish must all be smothered long ago, the crathurs, in prison down there."

"Well, Andy, I hope they'll be liberated next month. Meanwhile, the ice is a splendid highroad. Look there."

From behind a wooded promontory stretching far into the lake, at the distance of about half a mile from where they were chopping, emerged the figure of a very tall Indian, wrapped in a dark blanket and carrying a gun. After him, in the stately Indian file, marched two youths, also armed; then appeared a birchen traineau, drawn by the squaw who had the honour of being wife and mother respectively to the preceding copper-coloured men, and who therefore was constituted their beast of burden. A girl and a child—future squaws—shared the toil of pulling along the family chattels, unaided by the stalwart lords of the creation stalking in front.

"Why, thin, never welcome their impidence, an' to lave the poor women to do all the hard work, an' they marchin' out forenenst 'em like three images, so stiff an' so sthraight, an' never



ANDY HELPS THE INDIAN SQUAW TO CONSTRUCT THE WIGWAM.

spakin' a word. I'm afeard it's here they're comin'. An' I give ye my word she has a child on her back, tied to a boord; no wondher for 'em to be as stiff as a tongs whin they grows up, since the babies is rared in that way."

Not seeming to heed the white men, the Indians turned into a little cove at a short distance, and stepped ashore. The womankind followed, pulling their traineau with difficulty over the roughnesses of the landing place; while husband and sons looked on tranquilly, and smoked "kinne-kanik" in short stone pipes. The elderly squaw deposited her baby on the snow, and also comforted herself with a whiff; certain vernacular conversation ensued between her and her daughters, apparently about the place of their camp, and the younger ones set to work clearing a patch of ground under some birch-trees. Mrs. Squaw now drew forth a hatchet from her loaded sledge, and chopped down a few saplings, which were fixed firmly in the earth again a few yards off, so as to make an oval inclosure by the help of trees already standing.

"Throth, an' I'll go an' help her," quoth good-natured Andy, whose native gallantry would not permit him to witness a woman's toil without trying to lighten it. "Of all the ould lazy-boots I ever see, ye're the biggest," apostrophizing the silent stoical Indians as he passed where they lounged; "ye've a good right to be ashamed of yerselves, so ye have, for a set of idle spalpeens."

The eldest of the trio removed his pipe for an instant and uttered the two words—"I savage." Andy's rhetoric had been totally incomprehensible.

"Why, thin, ye needn't tell me ye're a savidge: it's as plain as a pikestaff. What'll I do with this stick, did ye say, ma'am? Oh, surra bit o' me knows a word she's sayin', though it's mighty like the Irish of a Connaught man. I wondher what it is she's thryin' to make; it resimbles the beginnin' of a big basket at present, an' meself standin' in the inside of the bottom. I can't be far asthray if I dhrive down the three where there's a gap. I don't see how they're to make a roof, an' this isn't a counthry where I'd exactly like to do 'athout one. Now she's fastenin' down the branches round, stickin' 'em in the earth, an' tyin' 'em together wid cord. It's the droll cord, never see a rope-walk anyhow."

Certainly not; for it was the tough bast of the Canadian cedar, manufactured in large quantities by the Indian women, twisted into all dimensions of cord, from thin twine to cables many fathom long; used for snares, fishing nets, and every species of stitching. Mrs. Squaw, like a provident housekeeper, had whole balls of it in her traineau ready for use; also rolls of birch-bark, which, when the skeleton wigwam was quite ship-shape, and well interlaced with crossbars of supple boughs, she began to wrap round in the fashion of a covering skirt.

Had crinoline been in vogue in the year 1851, Robert would have found a parallel before his eyes, in these birch-bark flounces arranged over a sustaining framework, in four successive falls, narrowing in circumference as they neared the top, where a knot of bast tied the arching timbers together. He was interested in the examination of these forest tent cloths, and found each roll composed of six or seven quadrangular bits of bark, about a yard square apiece, sewed into a strip, and having a lath stitched into each end, after the manner in which we civilized people use rollers for a map. The erection was completed by the casting across several strings of bast, weighted at the ends with stones, which kept all steady.

The male Indians now vouchsafed to take possession of the wigwam. Solemnly stalking up to Andy, the chief of the party offered his pipe to him for a puff.

"Musha thin, thank ye kindly, an' I'm glad to see ye've some notions o' civiltude, though ye do work the wife harder than is dacent." But after a single "draw," Andy took the pipe in his fingers and looked curiously into its bowl. "It's the quarest tobacco I ever tasted," he observed: "throth if I don't think it's nothin' but chips o' bark an' dead leaves. Here 'tis back for you, sir; it don't shute my fancy, not bein' an Indjin yet, though I donno what I mightn't come to." The pipe was received with the deepest gravity.

No outward sign had testified surprise or any other emotion, at the discovery that white men had settled close to their "sugar-bush," and of course become joint proprietors. The inscrutable sphinx-like calm of these countenances, the strangeness of this savage life, detained Robert most of the afternoon as by a sort of fascination. Andy's wrath at the male indolence was renewed by finding that the squaw and her girls had to cut and carry all the firewood needful: even the child of seven years old worked hard at bringing in logs to the wigwam. He was unaware that the Indian women hold labour to be their special prerogative; that this very squaw despised him for the help he rendered her; and that the observation in her own tongue, which was emphasized by an approving grunt from her husband, was a sarcasm levelled at the inferiority and mean-spiritedness of the white man, as exemplified in Andy's person.

One of the young fellows, who had dived into the forest an hour before, returned with spoil in the shape of a skunk, which the ever-industrious squaw set about preparing for the evening meal. The fearful odour of the animal appeared unnoticed by the Indians, but was found so hateful by Robert and his Irish squire, that they left the place immediately.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON A SWEET SUBJECT.

THIS Indian family was only the precursor of half a dozen others, who also established "camps," preparatory to their great work of tapping the maple trees. The Wynns found them inoffensive neighbours, and made out a good deal of amusement in watching their ways.

"I'd clear 'em out of that in no time," said Zack Bunting, "if the land were mine. Indians hain't no rights, bein' savages. I guess they darsn't come nigh my farm down the pond—they'd be apt to cotch it right slick, I tell you. They tried to pull the wool over my eyes in the beginnin', an' wanted to be tappin' in my bush as usual, but Zack Buntin' warn't the soft-headed goney to give in, I tell you. So they vamosed arter jest seein' my double-barrel, an' they hain't tried it on since. They know'd I warn't no doughface."

"Well, I mean to let them manufacture as much sugar as they want," said Robert: "there's plenty for both them and me."

"Rights is rights," returned Zack, "as I'd soon show the varmints if they dar'st come near me. But your Britisher government has sot 'em up altogether, by makin' treaties with 'em, an' givin' 'em money, an' buyin' lands from 'em, instead of kickin' 'em out as an everlastin' nuisance."

"You forget that they originally owned the whole continent, and in common justice should have the means of livelihood given to them now," said Robert. "It is not likely they'll 'trouble the white man long."

"I see yer makin' troughs for the sap," observed Zack. "What on airth, you ain't never hewin' 'em from basswood?"

"Why not?"

"Cos 'twill leak every single drop. Yer troughs must be white pine or black ash; an' as ye'll want to fix fifty or sixty on 'em at all events, that half-dozen ain't much of a loss."

"Couldn't they be made serviceable anyhow?" asked Robert, unwilling quite to lose the labour of his hands.

"Wal, you might burn the inside to make the grain closer: I've heerd tell on that dodge. If you warn't so far from the 'Corner,' we could fix our sugar together, an' make but one bilin' of it, for you'll want a team, an' you don't know nothin' about maples."

Zack's eyes were askance upon Robert. "We might 'most as well go shares—you give the sap, an' I the labour," he added. "I'll jest bring up the potash kettle on the sled a Monday, an' we'll spill the trees. You cut a hundred little spouts like this: an' have you an auger? There now, I guess that's fixed."

But he turned back after a few yards to say—"Since yer hand's in, you 'most might jest as well fix a score troughs for me, in case some o' mine are leaked:" and away he went.

"That old sharper will be sure to have the best of the bargain," thought Robert. "It's just his knowledge pitted against my inexperience. One satisfaction is that I am learning every day." And he went on with his troughs and spouts until near sundown, when he and Arthur went to look at the Indian encampment, and see what progress was being made there.

'I can't imagine," said the latter, "why the tree which produces only a watery juice in Europe should produce a diluted syrup in Canada."

"Holt said something of the heat of the March sun setting the sap in motion, and making it sweet. You feel how burning the noon is, these days."

"That's a statement of a fact, but not an explanation," said the cavilling Arthur. "Why should a hot sun put sugar in the sap?"

Robert had no answer, nor has philosophy either.

The Indians had already tapped their trees, and placed underneath each orifice a sort of rough bowl, for catching the precious juice as it trickled along a stick inserted to guide its flow. These bowls, made of the semicircular excrescences on a species of maple, serve various uses in the cooking line, in a squaw's ménage, along with basins and boxes of the universally useful birchen bark. When the sap has been boiled down into syrup, and clarified, it is again transferred to them to crystallize, and become solid in their keeping.

An Indian girl was making what is called gum-sugar, near the kettles: cutting moulds of various shapes in the snow, and dropping therein small quantities of the boiling molasses, which cooled rapidly into a tough yellowish substance, which could be drawn out with the fingers like toffy. Arthur much approved of the specimen he tasted; and without doubt the sugar-making was a sweetmeat saturnalia for all the "papooses" in the camp. They sat about on the snow in various attitudes, consuming whole handfuls and cakes of the hot sweet stuff, with rather more gravity, but quite as much relish, as English children would display if gifted with the run of a comfit establishment.

"Did you ever see anything like their solemnity, the young monkeys!" said Arthur. "Certainly the risible faculties were left out in the composition of the Indian. I wonder whether they know how to laugh if they tried."

"Do you know," said Robert, "Holt says that Indian mythology has a sort of Prometheus, one Menabojo, who conferred useful arts upon men; amongst others, this art of making maple-sugar; also canoe building, fishing, and hunting."

"A valuable and original genius," rejoined Arthur; "but I wonder what everybody could have been doing before his advent, without those sources of occupation."

Zack and his team arrived two mornings subsequently.

"Wal, Robert, I hope you've been a clearin' yer sugar-bush, an' choppin' yer firewood, all ready. Last night was sharp frosty, an' the sun's glorious bright to-day—the wind west, too. I hain't seen a better day for a good run o' sap this season. Jump on the sled, Arthur—there's room by the troughs."

"No, thank you," said the young man, haughtily, marching on before with his auger. He detested Zack's familiar manner, and could hardly avoid resenting it.

"We're worth some punkins this mornin', I guess," observed Zack, glancing after him. "He'll run his auger down instead of up, out o' pure Britisher pride an' contrariness, if we don't overtake him."

Arthur was just applying the tool to the first tree, when he heard Zack's shout.

"The sunny side! Fix yer spile the sunny side, you goney."

Which term of contempt did not contribute to Arthur's good humour. He persisted in continuing this bore where he had begun; and one result was that, at the close of the day, the trough underneath did not contain by a third as much as those situate on the south side of the trees.

"It ain't no matter o' use to tap maples less than a foot across. They hain't no sugar in 'em," said Zack, among his other practical hints. "The older the tree, the richer the sap. This 'ere sugar bush is as fine as I'd wish to tap: mostly hard maple, an' the right age. Soft maple don't make nothing but molasses, hardly—them with whitish skin; so you are safe to chop 'em down."

The little hollow spouts drained, and the seventy troughs slowly filled, all that livelong day, in the sunny air; until freezing night came down, and the chilled sap shrank back, waiting for persuasive sunbeams to draw its sweetness forth again. Zack came round with his team next afternoon, emptied all the troughs into one big barrel on his sled, and further emptied the barrel into the huge kettle and pot which were swung over a fire near the shanty, and which he superintended with great devotion for some time.

"I could not have believed that the trees could spare so much juice," observed Robert. "Are they injured by it, Bunting?"

"I ha' known a single maple yield a matter o' fifty gallons, an' that not so big a one neither," was the reply. "An' what's more, they grow the better for the bleedin'. I guess you hadn't none of this sort o' sugar to hum in England?"

"Not a grain: all cane sugar, imported."

"Wal, you Britishers must be everlastin' rich," was Zack's reply. "An' I reckon you don't never barter, but pays hard cash down? I wish I'd a good store somewhar in your country, Robert: I guess I'd turn a profit."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BUSY BEE.

WE'D ha' best sugar off the whole lot *al*together," Zack had said: and being the only one of the makers who knew anything about the manufacture, he was permitted to prescribe the procedure. The dark amber-coloured molasses had stood and settled for some days in deep wooden troughs, before his other avocations, of farmer and general storekeeper at the "Corner," allowed him to come up to the Cedars and give the finishing touch.

A breathless young Bunting—familiarly known as Ged, and the veriest miniature of his father—burst into the shanty one day during dinner—a usual visiting hour for members of his family.

"Well, Ged, what do you want?"

"Uncle Zack 'll be here fust thing in the mornin' to sugar the syrup, an' he says yo're to have a powerful lot of logs ready chopped for the fires," was the message. "I guess I thought I'd be late for dinner," the boy added, with a sort of chuckle, "but I ain't;" and he winked knowingly.

"Well," observed Arthur, laughing, "you Yankees beat all the world for cool impudence."

"I rayther guess we do, an' fur most things else teu," was the lad's reply, with his eyes fixed on the trencher of bear's meat which Andy was serving up for him. "Don't you be sparing of the pritters—I'm rael hungry:" and, with his national celerity, the viands disappeared.

When the meal was ended, Robert, as always, returned thanks to God for his mercies, in a few reverent words. The boy stared.

"I guess I hain't never heerd the like of that 'afore," he remarked. "Sure, God ain't nowhar hereabouts?"

Robert was surprised to find how totally ignorant he was of the very rudiments of the Christian faith. The name of God had reached his ear chiefly in oaths; heaven and hell were words with little meaning to his darkened mind.

"I thought a Methodist minister preached in your father's big room once or twice a year," observed Robert, after some conversation.

"So he do; but I guess we boys makes tracks for the woods; an' besides, there ain't no room for us nowhar," said Ged.

Here I may just be permitted to indicate the wide and promising field for missionary labour that lies open in Canada West. No fetters of a foreign tongue need cramp the ardent thought of the evangelist, but in his native English he may tell the story of salvation through a land large as half a dozen European kingdoms, where thousands of his brethren according to the flesh are perishing for want of knowledge. A few stray Methodists alone have pushed into the moral wilderness of the backwoods; and what are they among so many? Look at the masses of lumberers: it is computed that on the Ottawa and its tributaries alone they number thirty thousand men; spending their sabbaths, as a late observer has told us, in mending their clothes and tools, smoking and sleeping, and utterly without religion. Why should not the gospel be preached to these our brothers, and souls won for Christ from among them?

And in outlying germs of settlements like the "Corner," which are the centre of districts of sparse population, such ignorance as this of young Bunting's, tho' rare elsewhere in Canada or the States, is far from uncommon among the rising generation.

Zack arrived with the ox-sled at the time appointed, and Ged perched on it.

"Just look at the pile of vessels the fellow has brought to carry away his share of the molasses and sugar," said Arthur, as the clumsy vehicle came lumbering up. 'Twas a great stroke of business to give us all the trouble, and take all the advantage to himself—our trees, our fires, nothing but the use of his oxen as a set-off."

The advantage was less than Arthur supposed; for maples are not impoverished by drainage of sap, and firewood is so abundant as to be a nuisance. But for Zack's innate love of even the semblance of overreaching, he might have discerned that his gain in this transaction was hardly worth the pains.

"Wal, Robert, you ha' poured off the molasses into the kettles; an' now fur the clarifyin'. I knowed as how ye had nothen' fit—milk, nor calf's blood, nor eggs, nor nothen'—so I brought up the eggs, an' when we're settlin' shares they kin be considered."

"The old sharper!" muttered Arthur.

"I'm afeerd like they're beat up already," said Mr. Bunting, picking them gingerly out of his pockets, "though I made Ged drive a purpose. But that near ox has a trick of stickin' over stumps, an' I had obliged to cut a handspike to him. I declar' if they ain't all whole arter all, 'cept one." He smashed them into a wooden bowl half full of molasses, and beat them up with a chip, then emptied the contents into the kettles, stirring well. Hung over a slow fire, from a pole resting on two notched posts, the slight simmering sound soon began; and on the top of the heated fluid gathered a scum, which Zack removed. After some repetitions of this skimming, and when the molasses looked bright and clear, Mr. Bunting asked for a bit of fat bacon.

"Which can be considered when we're dividing shares," said Arthur, handing it to him a few minutes afterwards. A glance was Zack's reply, as he strung the bacon on a cord, and hung it below the rim, within two inches of the boiling surface.

"Indeed," quoth Robert, looking on at the operation of this expedient for preventing the spilling over of the molasses, "I wonder some cleaner mode of keeping the boiling within bounds has not been invented."

"The Scotchman Davidson cools with a run of cold sap, out of a little spout an' a keg; but them notions don't suit me nohow; the bit o' bacon fixes it jest as right. By the way, did you hear that his farm is took? By a Britisher gentleman—I'm told an officer, too; I guess he'll want to back out o' the bush faster than he got in, ef he's like the most of 'em. I know'd some o' the sort, an' they never did a cent's worth o' good, hardly, though they was above bein' spoke to. 'Tain't a location for soft hands an' handsome clothes, I guess; an' I declar ef I don't think I ever saw gentlemen Britishers git along so remarkably smart as yerselves: but ye hain't been above work, that's a fact."

The Wynns were glad enough of the prospect of a new neighbour of the educated class; for, more than once or twice, the total absence of congenial society in any sense of the word had been felt as a minor privation. Robert foresaw that when with future years came improved means and enlarged leisure, this need would be greater. Zack thought the new settlers ought to try and arrive before spring thaw.

"Yer own logging-bee might be 'bout that time, Robert," he observed, while he narrowly watched his kettles and their incipient sugar. "The fallow looks ready for burnin', I guess."

"Yes, 'tis nearly all chopped and piled; but I'm more anxious to have a raising-bee for my new house. The logging can wait for a couple of months, Davidson tells me."

"Wal, you'll want considerable of whisky for the ten," observed Zack, briskly; "all the 'Corner' 'll be sure to come, an' raise yer house off the ground right slick at onst. A frame-house, I cal-c'late?"

"Clapboarded and painted, if I can, Mr. Bunting."

"Now I don't want ever to hear of no better luck than I had in gittin' that consignment of ile an' white lead t'other day. Jest the very thing fur you, I guess!"

Robert did not seem similarly struck by the coincidence.

"Any one but Zack would have melted away long ago over that roaring fire," said Arthur some time afterwards, withdrawing from his kettle to fan himself. "Being a tall bag of bones, I suppose he can't dissolve readily. What's he going to do now, I wonder?"

Mr. Bunting had chipped a thin piece of wood from one of the fire logs, and wrought through it a narrow hole, inch long; this he dipped in the seething molasses, and drew it forth filled with a thin film, which he blew out with his breath into a long bubble of some tenacity.

"Thar! 'tis sugared at last,'' said he, jerking aside the chip; "an' now fur the pans."

By a remarkable clairvoyance, just at this juncture various younger members of the Bunting family made their appearance in the sugar-bush; and as fast as uncle Zack poured forth the sweet stuff into the tins and shallow wooden vessels placed to receive it, did half-a-dozen pilfering hands abstract portions to dip in the snow and devour. Zack's remonstrances and threats were of no avail, and whenever he made a dash towards them, they dispersed in all directions "quick as wink."

"Ef I ketch you, Ged, you'll know the defference of grabbin' a pound out of this 'ere tin, I guess, you young varmint!"

"'Tain't so kinder aisy to catch a 'coon, uncle Zack," was the lad's rejoinder from the fork of a birch where he had taken refuge, and sucked his stolen goods at ease. Similar raids harassed the long line of cooling tins, and not all the efforts of the sugar-makers at mounting guard could protect them, until the guerilla corps of youngsters became in some degree surfeited, and slid away through the woods as they had come. Meanwhile, the best part of a stone of the manufacture had vanished.

"Them are spry chaps, I reckon," was the parent's reflection, with some pride in their successful freebooting, though he had opposed its details.

"I would teach them to be honest, Mr. Bunting;" which speech only evoked a laugh.

"Now I guess you're riled 'cos they ran away with yer sugar, jest as ef 'twarn't more mine than yourn."

This was unpromising as portended the division into shares, wherein Robert was overreached, as he knew he should be; but he comforted himself by the reflection that next year he should be able to do without his odious assistant, and that for this summer he had housekeeping-sugar enough. He utterly refused to enter into any coalition for the making of vinegar or beer. Towards the close of the sap season he tapped a yellow birch, by his Scotch neighbour's advice, drew from it thirty gallons in three days, boiled down that quantity into ten gallons, and set it to ferment in a sunny place, with a little potato yeast as the exciting cause. Of course the result was immensely too much vinegar for any possible household needs, considering that not even a cucumber bed was as yet laid out in the embryo garden.

But now April, "the moon for breaking the snow-shoes," in Ojibbeway parlance, was advancing; patches of brown ground began to appear under the hot sunlight, oozy and sloppy until the two-feet depth of frost was gradually exhaled. The dwellers in the shanty had almost forgotten the look of the world in colours, for so many months had it slept in white array. Robert could have kissed the earliest knot of red and blue hepaticas which bloomed at the base of a log-heap. But he looked in vain for that eldest child of an English spring, the "wee modest crimson-tipped" daisy, or for the meek nestling primrose among the moss. And from the heaven's blue lift no music of larks poured down; no twitter of the chaffinch or whistle of the thrush echoed from the greening woods. Robert thought the blue-bird's voice a poor apology for his native songsters.

He had indeed little time for any reflections unconnected with hard work. The cedar swamp was shrinking before his axe, and yielding its fragrant timbers for the future house. From early morning till late at night the three men never ceased labour.

except for short meals; having, as their object and reward, the comfort of those dear ones who would arrive in July or August at farthest.

The existing shanty was to be retained as kitchen, and a little room could be railed off the end as a place for stores. Four apartments would constitute the new house, one of them to be a sitting room for the mother and Linda. How easy to build and furnish in fancy! how difficult in fact! Yet the raising-bee accomplished a great deal, though the Yankee storekeeper was discomfited to find that Davidson of Daisy Burn had undertaken the guidance of the hive; he sulked somewhat in consequence, and also because the consumption of spirits was not, as he had contemplated, to intoxication. Robert was backed by his sturdy Scottish neighbour in that resolve; and the more sensible of the workers could not but approve.

Four walls and roof were put together by the joint-stock labour of the day. Standing in the vacant doorway, Robert looked over the moonlit view of woods and islanded lake well pleased.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OLD FACES UPON NEW NEIGHBOURS.

Now, while Arthur devoted himself chiefly to the interior carpentering, Robert burned and cleared a patch of fallow to be a garden. Their good friend Hiram Holt, among his other useful gifts, had sent with them in the waggon a stock of young apple trees, which had lain all winter half buried in a corner of the hut, to be grubbed up in spring and planted out in rows four rods apart. Beds of potatoes and turnips, set at the edges with pumpkin seeds and squares of Indian corn, filled the garden space in an orderly manner before the end of May; then rail-fences sprang up about it, and the first bit of forest was fairly reclaimed.

During breakfast one morning Andy rushed in, proclaiming that a raft was in sight on the lake, "one 'most as big as a five-acre field," he said. This proved rather an imaginative description on Andy's part, like many other of his verbal sketches; for the raft was infantine compared with its congeners of the great lake and the St. Lawrence. A couple of bonds lashed together—that was all; and a bond containeth twenty cribs, and a crib containeth a variable amount of beams, according to lumberer's arithmetical tables. Arthur recognised his acquaintance, the Scotch foreman, pacing the deck; he hailed the unwieldy craft, and shipped himself aboard for a voyage to the "Corner," where he had business at the store.

"Wid a horn in front, an' a tail behind, there it goes," observed Andy, in allusion to the long oars projecting from rowlocks at each end. "An' now, Masther Robert, what'll become o' that in the rapids below the sawmill? Sure 'twill be batthered in pieces, an' the water so mighty coorse intirely there; enough to make chaneys of any raft."

"'Twill be taken asunder, and the cribs sent down separately over the falls," replied Mr. Wynn.

Arthur saw the operation by-and-by, and the hardy raftsmen shooting the rapids in what appeared to him circumstances of exciting peril. While he and all the disengaged dwellers at the "Corner" were as yet looking on, a waggon came in sight from among the trees, and turned their curiosity into another channel.

Gradually it drew near, stumbling among the stumps and ruts, with all sorts of language applied to the oxen. Arthur thought he had formerly seen that figure marching by the off-wheel. That peculiar gentleman-like and military air, even shouldering a handspike, could not be mistaken.

"I guess as how 'tis the Britisher officer as has took Davidson's betterments," said 'cute Zack; "an' thar's womanfolks behind the waggon afoot. Wal, now, but I say I *do* pity them Britisher ladies a-comin' into the bush—them that hain't never in their hull life as much as baked a biscuit. I ha' seen the like o' such in Montreal—delicate critters, that you wouldn't hardly think knowed the use of a fryin'-pan when they see'd it, an' couldn't lift one if they was to git a handful o' dollars. I guess these ain't much betterer nohow."

It was a homily on the appearance of Edith Armytage and the child Jay picking their steps along after the waggon; while within on the hampers and boxes stretched heavily lay their brother, taking things easy by means of sleep. The Captain's salute to Arthur was most cordial.

"So, my dear young friend! What most fortunate fate has thrown us together again? A very pleasant freak of destiny, truly. I left you last with an uncomfortable old gentleman, who was particularly obstinate in his opinions about the seignorial system, as I remember. He was right, my young friend, in condemning that system—eh? Perfectly right. I left it in disgust. Incompatible with a British officer's feelings—eh?"

Here his monologue was disturbed by little Jay's running up to Arthur very joyously. "I told Edith we should meet you. I knew we should. And how is Robert and your funny servant? Ah, I am very glad!"

"Jane, my dear, I have repeatedly told you not to be so boisterous," put in her father. "Go back, and walk with your sister Edith."

The little girl tried to withdraw her hand and obey, though with a wistful look; but Arthur detained it, and went with her the few steps to meet Miss Armytage.

"Edith, are you not glad? They all live at Cedar Creek, quite close to Daisy Burn, and we can see them every day, and he says Daisy Burn is a very nice place——"

"I have had some experience of children," began Captain Armytage, stiffly, "but one so talkative as Jane I have seldom met. You should correct her, Edith, my dear." For the man's voice was what he wished to hear. Edith's hand was most gently laid on the dear little sister's arm as a caution; but at this juncture both gentlemen were obliged to press forward and help the oxen out of some critical situations, and Jay could whisper her delight and her anticipations without fear of reprimand for a few minutes at least.

Then, when the waggon brought up in front of Mr. Bunting's store, young Armytage woke with a mighty yawn and stretch to declare that bush travelling was the greatest bore—would they ever reach the farm? and he thereupon arose to the exertion of kindling his pipe.

"Nonsense, Wynn, can that be you? Glad to see some face I know among these endless trees. They're nearly as sickening to me as waves to a fellow in his first voyage. Hope the farm has been well cleared of them; you know the ground, eh?"

"Not all cleared by any means; but if you had to take the axe in hand, as we have——"

"Gentlemen, are you going to liquor?" said Zack, in a persuasive tone, marshalling the way into his bar. "Almeria, tell your ma to bring here some of her best beer to treat these gentlemen—partic'lar friends. Be spry, will you?"

The tawny black-eyed young lady answering to the above high-sounding cognomen returned in a few moments with a jug, whence her father poured forth three horn goblets of dark fluid. Arthur, through superior knowledge not touching his, was highly amused by the grimaces of the others. Indeed, the captain had swallowed a huge gulp of it before he realized fully its strange flavour, and then could but sputter and scour his moustache and lips with his handkerchief. Mr. Bunting looked on with exemplary gravity.

"Thar! I told th' ole woman that spruce beer ain't so good as usual this brewin'."

"Good! the vilest compound—a fir-tree steeped in a stagnant pool!" exclaimed the irate captain, with considerable warmth of colouring. "Bring me something, sirrah, to take away the odious taste—anything you like."

Mr. Bunting obeyed with alacrity. Arthur left father and son over their pipes and glasses, and went outside to join Miss Armytage and Jay, who had declined various overtures to enter the store, and were the cynosure of all eyes in the "Corner" as they walked to and fro on the only stumpless strip of ground in the place—a fair child and a pale girl. Presently forth came the captain.

"Edith, my dear," he said, blandly, "I may be detained here for half an hour: I find that mine host, Mr. Bunting, has a very exact knowledge of the locality to which we are going. I think you both might be going on with the waggon; your brother will follow in a minute or so when his smoke is finished, he says. Driver, you may go forward: *au revoir*, Edith."

He kissed the tips of his fingers to his daughter gallantly, and passed into the bar again with a jaunty air.

"If you will allow me to accompany you," said Arthur, seeing that she hesitated, "you will do me a kindness, for I have rather a large pack to carry going home; I can rest it on the waggon; and Daisy Burn is more than half way to Cedar Creek."

"Did I not tell you we would find out Arthur and Robert?" said the child Jay, with an ecstatic clasp of her fingers upon young Wynn's. "You said you were afraid we should have no friends in the woods, but I knew that God would not let us be so forsaken as that."

And the three walked on into the long vista of the concession line.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONE DAY IN JULY.

A SUMMER more glorious than our settlers could have imagined, followed on the steps of the tardy spring. What serene skies—what brilliant sunshine—what tropical wealth of verdure! At every pore the rich earth burst forth into fruit and flower. Two months after the grass had been sunk deep beneath snow, sheets of strawberries were spread in the woods, an extemporized feast.

One might think that the cottage at Cedar Creek had also bloomed under the fair weather; for when July—hottest of Canadian months—came, the dingy wooden walls had assumed a dazzling white, with a roof so grey that the shingles might have been veritable slates. Resemblance to the lime-washed houses of home was Robert's fancy; which, in Zack Bunting's mind, was a perverted taste, as he recommended a brilliant green groundwork, picked out with yellow, such canary-bird costume being favourite in Yankee villages.

The few feet of garden railed off in front are filled with bushes of the fragrant Canadian wild-rose; yellow violets, lobelias, and tiger-lilies, transplanted thither from the forest glades, appear to flourish. The brothers had resolved that Linda should not miss her flower beds and their gentle care even in bush-life.

For the rest, the clearing looks wild enough, notwithstanding all civilizing endeavours. That mighty wall of trees has not been pushed back far, and the débris of the human assault, lying on the soil in vast wooden lengths, seems ponderous even to discouragement. Robert has been viewing it all through stranger eyes for the last week, since he heard the joyful news that they for whom he has worked have landed at Montreal; he has been putting finishing touches wherever he could, yet how unfinished it is.

To-day, Andy alone is in possession; for his young masters have gone to meet the expected waggon, as far as Peter Logan's—nay, to Greenock if necessary. He has abundance of occupation for the interval: first, to hill up a patch of Indian corn with the hoe, drawing the earth into little mounds five or six inches high round each stalk; and after that, sundry miscellaneous duties, among which milking the cow stands prominent. She is enjoying herself below in the beaver meadow, while the superior animal Andy toils hard among the stumps, and talks to himself, as wont."

"Why, thin, I wondher what th'ould masther 'ull say to our clearin', an' how he'll take to the life, at all at all; he that niver did a hand's turn yet in the way of business, only 'musin' himself wid papers an' books as any gintleman ought; how he'll stand seein' Masther Robert hoein' and choppin' like a labourin' man? More be token, it's little o' that thim pair down at Daisy Burn does. I b'lieve they 'spect things to grow ov thimselves 'athout any cultivatin'. An' to see that poor young lady hillin' the corn herself—I felt as I'd like to bate both the captin an' his fine idle son—so I would, while I could stand over 'em."

He executed an aërial flourish with his hoe, and the minute after found practical occupation for it in chasing two or three great swine who were poking at the fence, as if they longed for the sweet young corn-stalks within. Whence the reader may perceive that Mr. Wynn had become proprietor of certain items of live stock; including sundry fowls, which were apt to keep all parties in exhilirating exercise by their aggressions on the garden.

"Musha, but 'tis very hot intirely," soliloquized Andy, returning from the aggravated stern-chase of the swine, and lifting his grass hat to fan his flushed face. "The sun don't know how to obsarve a maydium at all in this counthry, as our poor old Irish sun does. We're aither freezin' or fryin' the year round." Hereupon, as reminded by the last-named experience, he threw down his hoe, and went to settle the smouldering fires in the fallow, where one or two isolated heaps of brush were slowly consuming, while their bluish smoke curled up lazily in the still air. "It's quare to think of how lonesome I am this minnit," continued he, as he blackened himself in ministering to the heaps. "Sorra livin' sowl to spake to nearer than the captin's, barrin' the cow, an' the pigs, an' thim savidges down at the swamp."

Here he made an infuriate swing backwards of a bush, fortunately in his hand; but it was against no Indian foe: on the contrary, his own shoulders received the blow, and another to make sure; whereby an individual enemy was pasted to the spot where its proboscis had pierced shirt and skin, and half a dozen others saved themselves by flight—being the dreaded black flies of Canada.

"Why, thin, ye murtherin' villins, will ye follow me into the smoke itself?" said Andy, whirling his bush in the air to disperse their squadrons. "I thought ye wor satisfied wid most 'atin' us last week, an' blindin' the young gintlemin, an lavin' lumps on their faces as big as hazel-nuts. Betune yerselves an' the miss kitties, it's hard for a man to do a sthroke of work, wid huntin' ye. Ay, ye may well moo, ye crathur below in the meadow, that has only horns an' a tail to fight 'em. An' sure, may be 'tain't the cow at all that's roarin', only one of them big frogs that bellows out of the swamp, for all the world as if they was bullocks."

To settle the question, he walked away down to the beaver-meadow, now an expanse of the most delicious level green, and found that the cow had protected herself against all winged adversaries by standing in the creek up to her throat in the cool water; where she chewed the cud tranquilly, and contemplated with an impassive countenance the construction of a canoe at a little distance, by two red men and their squaws. Andy paused, and looked on likewise.

One woman was stripping a large white birch of its bark, with a sharp knife; she scraped away the internal coating as a tanner would scrape leather, and laid the pieces before the other squaw, whose business was to stitch them together with bast. The men, meanwhile, prepared a sausage-shaped framework of very thin cedar ribs, tying every point of junction with firm knots; for the aforesaid bast is to the Indian what glue and nails are to the civilized workman.

"Throth, only for the birch threes I dunno what they'd do; for out of its skin they make houses, an' boats, an' pots to bile vittles, an' candles to burn, an' ornamints like what Mr. Robert has above." A pause, as he watched the bark turned over the ribs, and wedge-shaped pieces cut out to prevent awkward foldings near the gunwale—all carried on in solemn silence. "Well, there's no manner of doubt but savages are great intirely at houldin' their tongues, sure, may be it's no wondher, an' their langidge the quare sort it is, that they don't want to spake to each other but as little as they can help."

Here the nearest Indian raised his head, and appeared to listen to a distant sound; a low word or two attracted the attention of the others, who also listened, and exchanged a few sentences, with a glance at Andy, whose curiosity was roused: and he asked, chiefly by signs, what it was all about.

"Oxen—waggon," was the reply: "me hear driver. White man no have long ears."

Andy fled with precipitation to his neglected duties, while the red men laughed their low quiet laugh, knowing that the waggon they heard could not reach Cedar Creek in less than an hour.

But at last it came. At last Linda, pressing eagerly forward upon Robert's arm, had caught a first glimpse of their cottage home, and exclaimed, "O Bob, how pretty! Why, you told me it was a rough sort of a place: how very pretty!"

"Well, you can't deny that the *place* is rough," said he, after a pause of much satisfaction; "look at the log-heaps—as tangled as a lady's work basket."

"Never mind the log-heaps; the house is neat enough for a picture; and the view! what a lovely placid lake! what islands! what grand woods!"

Linda's speech was nothing but interjections of admiration for the next half-hour; she *would* be charmed with every handiwork of the dear brothers who had wrought so hard for them. And how were these repaid for that past toil, by the sweet mother's smile as she entered the neat little parlour, and was established in the rocking chair which Arthur had manufactured and cushioned with exceeding pains! The other furniture was rather scholastic, it is true, being a series of stools and a table, set upon rushen matting of Indian make; the beams overhead were unceiled, and the hearth necessarily devoid of a grate. But the chimney space—huge in proportion to the room—was filled with fragrant and graceful forest boughs; and through the open casement window (Arthur had fitted the single sash on hinges, doorwise) looked in stray sprays of roses, breathing perfume. Mrs. Wynn was well satisfied with her exile at that moment, when she saw the loving faces of her sons about her again, in the home of their own raising.

A most joyful re-union! yet of that gladness which is near akin to tears. Robert would not give anybody a minute to think, or to grow sad. His father and George must walk with him all round the clearing and down to the beaver meadow. His acres of spring-burned fallow, his embryo garden, his creek and its waterfalls, must be shown off as separate articles of the exhibition.

"Bob, what are these?" The old gentleman stopped before an expanse of blackened stumps, among which a multitude of molehills diversified the soil.

"Potatoes, sir. That's the Canadian way of raising them on new land—in hills of five thousand to the acre. You see ridges would be out of the question, or any even system of culture, on account of the stumps and roots."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Wynn, drily; "such ground must certainly require a peculiar method of working. I dare say you find it incumbent on you to forget all your Irish agriculture?"

"Well, I had a good deal to unlearn," answered Robert. "I hoped to have had our logging-bee before your arrival, and then the farm would have looked tidier; but I could not manage it."

"Do you mean to say the trees stood as thick here as they do there? If so, you have done wonders already," said his father. "My poor boys, it was killing work."

"Not at all, sir," contradicted Robert right cheerily; "I enjoyed it after the first few weeks, as soon as I began to see my way. We've been quite happy this winter in the woods, though bush-life was so new and strange."

"It seems to me simply to mean a permanent descent into the ranks of the labouring classes, without any of the luxuries of civilization such as an English artizan would enjoy," said the old gentleman.

"Except the luxury of paying neither rent nor taxes," rejoined Robert, promptly.

"You seem to have been carpenter, house-painter, wood-cutter, ploughman——"

"No, sir; there isn't a plough on the premises, and I shouldn't know what to do with it if there were."

"Had you no assistance in all this?"

"Oh yes; invaluable help in Jacques Dubois, a lively little French Canadian from the 'Corner,' whose indomitable *esprit* was worth more than the stronger physique of a heavy Anglo-Saxon. But come, sir, I hear the dinner bell."

Which was the rattling of a stick on an invalided kettle, commonly used by Andy to summon his masters home. To impress the new arrivals with a sense of their resources, a feast, comprising every accessible delicacy, had been prepared. Speckled trout from the lake, broiled in the hot wood ashes, Indian fashion; wild fowl of various species, and wild fruits, cooked and *au naturel*, were the components.

"I hardly thought you would have found time for strawberry cultivation," observed Mr. Wynn the elder.

"And we have far more extensive strawberry beds, sir, than I ever saw in Ireland," said Robert, with a twinkle of his eyes. "I'm thinking of turning in the pigs to eat a few pailfuls; they are quite a drug for abundance."

"A raspberry tart!" exclaimed Linda; "and custards! Why, Bob!"

"Would you like to know a secret?"—followed by a whisper.

"Nonsense! not you!"

They seemed to have other secrets to tell by-and-by, which required the open air. The eleven months last gone past had brought many changes to both. And there they walked to and fro on the margin of the forest, until the moon's silver wheel rolled up over the dusk trees, and lit Cedar Creek gloriously.

"What pure and transparent air!" exclaimed Linda, coming back to the present from the past. "Is your moonlight always laden with that sweet aromatic odour?"

"Don't you recognise balm of Gilead? Your greenhouse and garden plant is a weed here. Our pines also help in the fragrance you perceive."

"Robert, I know that the red patches burning steadily yonder are the stumps you showed me; but the half circular rings of fire, I don't understand them."

"The niggers round the trunks of some trees," explained Robert. "That's a means we use for burning through timber, and so saving axe-work. Do you notice the moving light in the distance, on the lake? It comes from a pine-torch fixed in the bow of a canoe, by which an Indian is spearing fish."

"Oh, have you Indians here? how delightful! I have always so longed to see a real live red man. Are they at all like Uncas and

Chingachgook? I shall pay them a visit first thing in the morning."

"You'll be visited yourself, I imagine;" and Robert laughed. "You don't know the sensation your arrival has caused."

CHAPTER XXX.

VISITORS AND VISITED.

AND next day Mrs. and Miss Wynn had indeed visitors. Up from the "Corner" trundled Mrs. Zack Bunting on the ox-sled, accompanied by her son Nimrod, and by her daughter Almeria; and truly, but for the honour of bringing a vehicle, it had been better for her personal comfort to have left it at home. Dressed in the utmost finery they could command, and which had done duty on all festive occasions for years back, they lumbered up to the front door, where Linda was doing some work in the flower beds.

"Good morning, Miss. Is your ma to hum?" said Mrs. Zack, bestowing a stare on her from head to foot. "I'm Miss Bunting, as you may have heerd Robert speak on. This young lady is my daughter Almeria; I guess you're older than her, though she's a good spell taller. Nim, call that boy to mind the oxen while you come in, or I've a notion they'll be makin' free with Miss's flowers here."

The boy was George Wynn, who came up slowly and superciliously in answer to Nim's shout, and utterly declined to take charge of the team, intimating his opinion that it was very good employment for "swallow-tail" himself. Which remark alluded to the coat worn by Mr. Nimrod—a vesture of blue, with brass buttons, rendered farther striking by loose nankeen continuations, and a green cravat.

How insignificant was gentle Mrs. Wynn beside the Yankee woman's portly presence! How trifling her low voice in answer to the shrill questioning! Linda cast herself into the breach (metaphorically), and directed the catechism upon herself. As for the young lady Almeria, she was quite satisfied to sit and stare with unwinking black eyes, occasionally hitching up her blue silk cape by a shrug of shoulder, or tapping the back of her faded pink bonnet against the wall, to push it on her head. Nim entered the room presently, and perched himself on the edge of a stool; but his silent stare was confined to Linda's face, now flushed prettily through the clear skin with a mixture of anger and amusement.

"I guess now, that's the latest Europe fashion in yer gown?" taking up the hem of the skirt for closer inspection. "Half-a-dollar a yard 'twould be in Bytown, I reckon; but it's too fine for a settler's wife, Miss. You've come to the right market for a husband, I guess; gals is scarce in Gazelle township," with a knowing smile. The crimson mounted to Linda's brow, under the conjoint influence of Nimrod's stare and also of the entrance of another person, Sam Holt, who had come with the party yesterday from Mapleton.

But in two minutes he had quietly turned the conversation, and repressed, as much as it was in man's power to do, Mrs. Bunting's interrogative propensities.

"That's a washy, good-for-nothin' woman, that Mis' Wynn," was the visitor's judgment, as she departed in state on the ox-sled. "The young un's spryer; but I'd like to be waitin' till they'd ha' the house clar'd up between 'em, wouldn't I? Did you see that hired help o' theirn, Almeria?"

"Yes, ma, an Irish girl, I guess. She was a-top o' the waggon yesterday."

"So our Libby hain't no chance o' bein' took, 'less this young un should grow cockish, as 'most all Britisher helps does, when they gets a taste o' liberty. Wal, now, but I'd like to know what business them ladies has—for they're rael, an' no mistake, very different from Mis' Davidson, with her hands like graters an' her v'ice like a loon's so loud an' hard—an' you may know the rael ladies by the soft hand an' the aisy v'ice."

Almeria rubbed her own knuckles, seeking for the symptom of gentle blood.

"What business has they," continued Mrs. Zack, "away down here in the bush? I guess they couldn't wash a tub o' clothes or fix a dinner for the men."

"But they hadn't need to," put in Miss Almeria, out of sorts at finding her hand rough as a rasp. "They've helps, an' needn't never look at a tub." Which circumstance apparently set her in a sulk for the next mile.

Although Mrs. Davidson was failing in some lady-like requirements, as the storekeeper's wife had indicated, and also came to visit her new neighbour in a homespun suit, the very antipodes of Mrs. Zack's attire of many colours, yet her loud cheery voice and sensible face—with a possible friendship in it—were exceedingly pleasing, in contrast with the first visitor's nasal twang and "smart" demeanour. Mrs. Wynn would like to see her often; but the Scotchwoman was thrifty and hardworking, with a large family to provide for: she could not afford to pay visits, and scarcely to receive them.

"I wadna ha' come down the day, but thinkin' mayhap ye wad be wantin' help o' some sort; an' if there's anything we could do—Sandy or me and the lads—just send your lad rinnin' up; we'll be glad eneugh. Sabbath, may be, I'd ha' time to tak' a stroll down: ye ken there's na kirk."

Ah, it was one of Mrs. Wynn's greatest troubles in coming to the bush that there were no public means of grace, and that no sound of the church-going bell was ever heard in these solitudes.

Late in the afternoon Linda was able to find Robert, and bring him with her towards the Indian encampment. Sam Holt joined them.

"Now for my first introduction into savage life: I hope I shan't be disappointed."

"Unreasonable expectations always are," observed Mr. Holt. "Don't expect to find Fenimore Cooper's model Indians. But I believe them in the main to be a fine people, honest and truthful where 'civilization' has not corrupted them."

"Is it not dreadful that the first effect of European contact with original races everywhere should be destructive?" said Linda; "even of the English, who have the gospel!"

"Yes: how sad that they who bear Christ's name should dishonour him and thwart his cause among men, by practical disregard of his precepts. I shouldn't wonder if the red man hated the white man with a deadly hatred; for to him is owing the demoralization and extinction of a noble race—if it were by no other means than the introduction of the 'fire-water,' which has proved such a curse."

"I have heard," said Robert, "that in the Indian languages there are no words which could be employed in swearing; and the native must have recourse to the tongue of his conquerors if he would thus sin."

"And has no effort been made to Christianize them?" asked Linda.

"I have visited the Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron," said Mr. Holt, "where the remains of several Indian tribes have been collected by Sir Francis Head, with a view to their civilization; and I can hardly say that the experiment impressed me favourably. It is the largest fresh-water island in the world, more than a hundred miles long, and serves as a fine roomy cage for the aborigines, who support themselves by hunting, fishing, and a little agriculture, and receive those luxuries which to us are necessaries, such as blankets and clothes, as annual presents from government. They seemed miserably depressed and stolid; but the schools are well attended, and we may indulge some hope about the rising generation."

"They seem too apathetic to improve," said Robert.

"Still, it is our duty to work, however unpromising the material. I was pleased with a service which I attended in one of their log-schoolhouses. Nothing could be more devout than the demeanour of the Indians; the women's sweet plaintive hymns haunted me for a long while."

"That's curious; for in their wild state I can't make out that they sing at all," remarked Robert. "The noise they call music is far more like the growling of beasts; and their only instrument, that I have ever seen, is a sort of drum with one head."

"Hush, here are some of them," said Linda.

In a glade of the forest, two young girls were cutting wood, wielding hatchets as though well accustomed to their use, and displaying finely formed arms at every movement. For, as a general rule, the hardworking Indian woman is more strongly developed in proportion than her lazy lord. Lounging against a pine close by, was a tall, slender young man, attired in a buffalo skin cloak, of which the head and fore-legs portion hung down with a ragged effect; from under his arm projected an ornamented pipe.

"I think he might work, and the ladies look on," observed Linda.

She could hardly repress an exclamation as he turned his face towards her. Round his eyes were traced two yellow circles, and his mouth was inclosed by a parenthesis of vermillion; an arabesque pattern adorned each dusky cheek.

"Isn't he a brilliant fellow?" whispered Robert. "A lover, you may be certain, who has attired himself thus to come out here and display his painted face to these girls."

"But he does not appear to speak a single word to them."

"Oh, they do a good deal with the eyes," he answered, laughing, "Now that I look at the girls, one of them is quite pretty, and I fancy I can detect a blush through the olive of her cheek."

"What a hideous custom that painting the face is!"

"I can't agree with you; that young fellow would look much worse if he washed the paint off, and he knows it. You'd regret the change yourself, when you saw him look mean, dirty, and insignificant, as at ordinary times; for rarely he decorates himself thus."

"Well, I beg you won't carry your liking so far as to practise it, nor Mr. Holt either." Sam bowed obediently.

Perhaps nothing in the camp amused the European young lady more than the infants, the "papooses," in their back-board cradles, buried up to the armpits in moss, and protected overhead by an arch of thin wood, whence hung various playthings for the inmate.

"Now I can comprehend the use of this rattle, or even of the tiny mocassins," said Mr. Holt, philosophically, as they investigated the pendants to the papoose. "But why this piece of deer-leather, with bits of stag-horn attached? Except as a charm——"

Here nature answered the ingenious speculation, by the little coppery hand put forth to grasp the debated toy, and champ it in the baby mouth, after the fashion of our own immemorial coral-and-bells. This was the beginning of Linda's acquaintance with, and interest for the poor Indians. She afterwards saw much of them in their wigwams and at their work. A little kindness goes far towards winning the Indian heart. They soon learned to regard all at Cedar Creek as friends, while to the young lady they gave the admiring cognomen of Ahwao, the Rose.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUNDAY IN THE FOREST.

LINDA soon learned to hail it with delight. For the overwhelming labours of the other six days were suspended during this bright first: the woodman's axe lay quietly in its niche by the grindstone, the hoe hung idly in the shed; Robert shook off sundry cares which were wont to trouble his brotherly brow from Monday till Saturday, and almost to obscure the fact of his loving little sister to his brotherly eyes; and was able to enjoy that rarity in bush-life, an interval of leisure.

She found a considerable development in these brothers of hers. From coping with the actual needs and stern realities of existence, from standing and facing fortune on their own feet, so to speak, they had mentally become more muscular. The old soft life of comparative dependence and conventionality was not such as educates sturdy characters or helpful men. This present life was just the training required. Linda discovered that Robert and Arthur were no longer boys to be petted or teased, as the case might be; but men in the highest attributes of manhood—forethought, decision, and industry. It was on Sunday that she got glimpses of their old selves, and that the links of family affection were rivetted and brightened; as in many a home that is not Canadian.

For the rest; these Sundays were barren days. The uncommon toil of the past week was not favourable to spirituality of mind; and which of all the party could become teacher to the others? Mr. Wynn had some volumes of sermons by old orthodox divines, brought out indeed in his emigration with a view to these sabbath emergencies. When prayers were read, and the usual psalms and lessons gone through, he would mount his silver spectacles, fix himself in a particularly stately attitude in his high-backed chair, and commence to read one of the discourses (taking out a paper mark before hand) in a particularly stately voice. It is not exceeding the truth to say that George oftentimes was driven to frantic efforts to keep himself awake; and even Arthur felt the predisposition of Eutychus come stealing over him.

Sometimes the Davidsons came down. The sturdy Scotchman had all his national objections to "the paper:" and when convinced that it was better to hear a printed sermon than none at all, he kept a strict out look on the theology of the discourse, which made Mr. Wynn rather nervous. A volume of sermons was altogether interdicted as containing doctrine not quite orthodox; as he proved in five minutes to demonstration, the old gentleman having fled the polemic field ignominiously.

"Robert, in all your dreams for a settlement, have you ever thought of the church there ought to be?"

"Thought of it?—to be sure, and planned the site. Come along, and I'll show it to you—just where the tinned spire will gleam forth prettily from the woods, and be seen from all sides of the pond. Come; I'll bring you an easy way through the bushes:" and as she was leaning on his arm for an afternoon stroll, with the other dear brother at her left hand, of course she went where he wished.

"When I was out with Argent last winter," observed Arthur, we came to a lot of shanties, called by courtesy a village (with some grand name or other, and intending, like all of them, to be some day at least a capital city); where they were beginning to build a church. It was to be a very liberal-minded affair, for all sects were to have it in turn till their own places were built: and on this understanding all subscribed. Odd subscriptions! The paper was brought to Argent and me, he gave a few dollars; most people gave produce, lumber, or shingles, or so many days' work, or the loan of oxen, and so on."

"And as they do everything by 'bees,' from building a house down to quilting a counterpane, I suppose they had a bee for this," said Linda.

"Exactly so. But it seemed a great pull to get it on foot at all. New settlers never have any money—like ourselves," jauntily added Arthur. "I never thought I could be so happy with empty pockets. Don't be deceived by that jingling—it is only a few keys which I keep for purposes of deception. Haven't I seen uncle Zack's eyes glisten, and I am certain his mouth watered, when he thought the music proceeded from red cents!"

"But why must our church have a tin spire?" asked Linda, by-and-bye. "It would remind me of some plaything, Bob."

"Because it's national," was the reply. "But you needn't be afraid; if we have a shed like a whitewashed barn for the first ten years, with seats of half-hewn logs, we may deem ourselves fortunate and never aspire to the spire. Excuse my pun."

"Oh, did you intend that for a pun?" asked Linda, innocently. "I beg your pardon for not laughing in the proper place. But how about the minister of these bush churches, Bob?"

"Well, as the country opens up and gets cleared, we may reckon on having some sort of minister. I mean some denomination of preacher, within twenty-five or thirty miles of us; and he will think nothing of riding over every Sunday. It's quite usual."

"He's a zealous man that does it in the bitter winter, with the weather some degrees below zero," remarked Arthur.

"How happy he must feel to be able to deny himself, and to suffer for Jesus' sake," said Linda, softly. "Robert, I often think could *we* do nothing down in that wretched place they call the 'Corner,' where nobody appears to know anything about God at all? Couldn't we have a Sunday school, or a Bible class, or something of that sort? It hardly appears right to be Christians and yet hold our tongues about our Saviour among all these dark souls."

The thought had been visiting Robert too, during some of his Sundays; but had been put aside from a false timidity and fear of man. "How holy must be my life, how blameless my actions, if I set up to teach others?" was one deterring consideration. As if he could not trust his God's help to keep him what a Christian ought to be!

"We will think over it, Linda," he said, gravely.

An opening seemed to come ere next sabbath. On the Saturday arrived at the "Corner," the worthy itinerant preacher who occasionally visited there, and was forthwith sent up to the Wynns' shanty for entertainment by Zack Bunting; who, however willing to enjoy the eclat of the minister's presence, was always on the look-out for any loophole to save his own purse; and had indeed been requested by Mr. Wynn to commit the pastor to his hospitality when next he came round. Little of the cleric in appearance or garb was about this man of God. A clear-headed, strongly convictioned person, with his Bible for sole theologic library, and a deep sense of the vast consequence of his message at his heart, he dismounted from the sturdy Canadian horse which his own hands were used to attend, and entered the emigrant's dwelling with apostolic salutation—"Peace be to this house."

"Very unlike our old-country ministers, my dear," said gentle Mrs. Wynn to her daughter; "and I fear I never could get reconciled to that blanket coat and top-boots; but he's a good man—a *very* good man, I am sure. I found him speaking to Andy Callaghan in the kitchen about his soul; and really Andy looked quite moved by his earnestness. It seems he makes it a rule never to meet any person without speaking on the subject: I must say I highly approve of that for a minister."

What a strange congregation was gathered in Zack Bunting's large room next noon! All sorts of faces, all sorts of clothes. Mrs. Zack and Almeria in rainbow garments; the Davidsons in sensible homespun; the Wynns in old-country garb, were prominent. News had gone far and near that preaching was to be enjoyed that sabbath at the "Corner;" and from daybreak it had made a stir along the roads. Ox-sleds, waggons, mounted horses, came thither apace by every available path through the woods. Old men and maidens, young men and matrons and children, crowded before the preacher, as he spoke to them from the verse—"Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*."

Now an emphasis was laid on those last two words that might well make hypocrites wince. And Zack Bunting had been singing with considerable fervour various hymns totally unsuited to his state of soul; as proprietor of the meeting-place, it became him to set an example of devotion—besides, was not religion a highly respectable thing? Among other hymns had been that beautiful outpouring of individual faith and love—

"Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon.'

All this had Zack sung unflinchingly, as though one syllable of it were true for *him!*

The preacher dealt with the evil faithfully. He told his hearers that the common words repeated continually and often thoughtlessly, "Our Lord Jesus Christ," contained in themselves the very essence of God's glorious salvation. "Jesus," Saviour—He whose precious blood was shed to take away the sin of the world, and who takes away our sins for ever, if only we believe in him: "Christ," the Divine title, whose signification gave value inconceivable to the sacrifice on Calvary; the Anointed One, the Prince of the kings of the earth; "Our Lord," our Master—the appropriation clause which makes him and all the blessings of his gospel truly ours for ever, by faith in his name. In simpler words than are written here it was told; and the grand old story of peace, the good news of all the ages, that which has gladdened the hearts of unnumbered millions with the gladness which death does not extinguish, but only brighten into celestial glory—how God can be "just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" how there is no preparation needed for the reception of this vast boon of pardon, but simply the pre-requisite of being a sinner and needing a Saviour; how all present might there, that hour, become forgiven souls, children of the royal family of heaven, heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ, by means no more laborious than believing on Jesus as the Pardoner, coming to him in prayer for his great gift of forgiveness, and taking it, being sure of it from his hands, as a beggar takes alms for no deservings of his own. The preacher spoke all this with soul-felt earnestness; it was the message of his life.

Even when the motley congregation drifted away down the creaking narrow stairs and into the open sunny air, where their motley vehicles stood among the stumps, waiting, they could not at once shake off the impression of those earnest words. In amidst their talk of fall wheat, and burning fallow, and logging bees, would glide thoughts from that sermon, arresting the worldliness with presentations of a mightier reality still; with suggestions of something which perhaps indeed was of deeper and more vital interest than what to eat, or what to drink, or wherewithal to be clothed.

Plenty of invitation had the pastor as to his further progress. Few settlers but would have deemed it an honour to have his shanty turned for the nonce into a church. Many there were accustomed to the means of grace weekly at home, who pined unavailingly for the same blessings in the bush. Ah, our English sabbaths ! how should we thank God for them !

Robert plucked up heart, and asked two or three seriously disposed young men to meet him every Sunday afternoon in the cottage of Jacques Dubois, for the purpose of reading the Bible together. Linda's plan of a Scripture class for girls was rather slower of realization ; owing partly to a certain timidity, not unnatural in a gently nurtured girl, which made her shrink from encountering the quick-witted half-republican, and wholly insubordinate young ladies of the "Corner."

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE CAPTAIN CLEARED HIS BUSH.

The next great event in our settlers' history was their first logging bee, preparatory to the planting of fall wheat. The ladies had been quite apprehensive of the scene, for Robert and Arthur could give no pleasant accounts of the roysterings and revelry which generally distinguished these gatherings. But they hoped, by limiting the amount of liquor furnished to sufficient for refreshment, though not sufficient for intoxication, that they could in a measure control the evil, as at their raising bee four months previously.

The mass of food cooked for the important day required so much extra labour, as sorely to discompose the Irish damsel who acted under Linda's directions. Miss Biddy Murphy had already begun to take airs on herself, and to value her own services extravagantly. Life in the bush was not her ideal in coming to America, but rather high wages, and perchance a well-to-do husband; and, knowing that it would be difficult to replace her, she thought she might be indolent and insolent with impunity. Linda's mother never knew of all the hard household work which her fair fragile girl went through in these days of preparation, nor what good reason the roses had for deserting her cheeks. Mamma should not be vexed by hearing of Biddy's defection; and there was an invaluable and indignant coadjutor in Andy.

Everybody was at the bee. Zack Bunting and his team, Davidson and his team, and his tall sons; Captain Armytage and Mr. Reginald; Jacques Dubois and another French Canadian; a couple of squatters from the other side of the lake; altogether two dozen men were assembled, with a fair proportion of oxen.

It was a burning summer day: perhaps a hundred degrees in the sun at noon. What a contrast to the season which had witnessed the fall of the great trees now logging into heaps. Robert could hardly believe his memory, that for three months since the year began, the temperature of this very place had been below the freezing point.

Mr. Reginald Armytage volunteered to be grogbos, an office which suited his "loafing" propensities, since his duties consisted in carrying about a pail of water and a bottle of whiskey to the knots of workmen. His worthy father's position was almost as ornamental, for after one or two feeble efforts with a handspike, he went to talk with Mr. Wynn the elder—chiefly of a notable plan which he had for clearing a belt of wood lying between his farmhouse and the lake, and which quite shut out all view.

"You see that Scotch fellow had no taste about his place, eh? He just thought of the vulgar utilitarian facts of the farm as it were; but for the cultivation of the eye, the glorious influences of landscape, he had no thought. Daisy Burn might as well be in the bottom of a pit; all one can see is the sky and the walls of forest outside the clearing. Now my plan is—Reginald, my boy," as the grogbos passed within hearing distance, "give me the cup. The day is sultry to an extreme, eh?" Having refreshed his throat, he proceeded: "My plan is, to set on fire that strip of forest, eh? I never could abide the slow work of the axe. With proper precautions, such as engineers use along the new rail-lines, the burning might be kept within bounds, eh?"

Mr. Wynn, who knew nothing at all about the matter, courteously assented.

"Just look at my father, the glorious old gentleman, how he stands like a general overseeing a lot of pioneers," said Robert to Arthur, as they passed one another. "Wonder what he and that drone are conversing about so long."

"I heard Armytage saying he would clear the belt of his forest on the lake with fire," was the reply. "In which case we may look out."

"Whew!" Robert whistled a long note. But his gang of teamsters wanted him and his handspike, so he went on. Each yoke of oxen had four men attached to it, for the purpose of rolling the logs on top of each other, and picking the ground clear after them; which last means gathering all chips and sticks into the pile likewise. An acre to each team is considered a fair day's work. Robert was so busy as quite to forget the Captain and his alarming method of clearing, thenceforth.

By evening, something had been done towards disentangling

Cedar Creek. The trees, which had lain about at every conceivable angle, in the wildest disorder, were rolled into masses ready for burning, through six acres of the clearing. The men had worthily earned their supper. In the old shanty it was laid out, on boards and tressels from end to end. The dignified Mr. Wynn of Dunore took the chair; Captain Aymytage was vice, or croupier. As to attendance, the Irish damsel struck work at the most critical juncture, and refused to minister to them in the article of tea. The ever-ready Andy, just in with blackened hands from his long day's fieldwork, washed them hurriedly, and became waiter for the nonce; having first energetically declared that if he was Biddy Murphy, he'd be 'shamed to ate the bread he didn't airn; and that she might go home to her mother as soon as she liked, for an iligant young lady as she was. Zack Bunting overheard the strife, and the same night, on his return home, dropped a hint to the girl Libby—short for Liberia—his wife's orphan and penniless niece, who dwelt with them as a servant, and whose support they were anxious to get off their hands; and so, to her own prodigious astonishment, the recalcitrant Biddy found herself superseded, and the American help hired a day or two afterwards.

"The whole affair of the bee was not so formidable as you thought," said Robert to his sister, subsequently. They were together in a canoe upon the pond, enjoying a tranquil afternoon, and ostensibly fishing.

"Oh no, not so bad. You know I saw very little of your hive, except indeed the storekeeper's son, who was dressed so fantastically, and who would come offering his help in my cookery."

"I saw you talking to Jackey Dubois. Could you make anything of his French?"

"Well, I tried, and of course could understand him; but the accent is very queer. He calls Canada always Conodo; in fact he puts 'o' for 'a' and 'i' constantly. The article 'la' turns into 'lo,' 'voir' becomes 'voar.' That puzzles one—and the nasal twang besides. I wonder why *that* is so universal. Even your nice friend Mr. Holt is affected by it, though slightly."

"He told me once that it is a national peculiarity; and no matter what pains a man takes to preserve himself or his children from it, insensibly it grows in the pronunciation. He believes that something in the climate affects the nasal organs; he predicts it for me, and I suppose for all of us."

"I hope not. Robert, I think the foliage on the shores is changing colour already."

"I daresay; the maple blushes scarlet very early. Ah, wait till you see the Indian summer, with its gorgeous tinting and soft pink mists."

And here Robert jerked into the boat a fine speckled trout caught by the bait of a garden worm. He had captured half a dozen in half an hour.

"One would think the mists were come already," said Linda, still gazing at the waved outline of the shore. "There seems to be fog away yonder."

"The Captain burning his fallow, I presume," said Robert, raising his eyes from his hook. But the smoke was larger than that would account for.

"We will paddle a little nearer and investigate," said he, laying down his tackle. A dread suspicion stole into his mind, which whitened his very lips.

They approached and coasted; the smell of burning wood becoming stronger—the smoke hanging over those headlands denser.

It was as he feared—the forest was on fire.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FOREST ON FIRE.

Robert drew his paddle into the canoe, and sat perfectly still for some moments, gazing towards the fire and taking in its circumstances. They could hear the dull roar of the blaze distinctly, and even caught a glimpse of its crimson glare through an opening in the tall pines fringing the lake. It must have been burning a couple of hours to have attained such mastery. Dark resinous smoke hung heavily in the air: a hot stifling gust of it swept down on the canoe.

"The wind is towards the pond, most providentially," said Robert, taking up his paddle, and beginning to stroke the water vigorously towards home. "The burning *may* do no harm; but fire is a fearful agent to set afoot. I'm sure the Captain heartily wishes his kindling undone by this time."

"Is there no danger to the farm, Robert?" asked his sister, who had become blanched with fear. "I never heard such a terrible sound as that raging and crackling."

"To Daisy Burn none, I should say; for of course the man had sense enough to fire the bush only a long way down in front. an extensive clearing rather round the house, and the breeze will keep away the blaze."

"Thank God," fervently ejaculated Linda. "I wish we could bring Miss Armytage and little Jay to the Creek while it lasts. Wouldn't you go across for them, Bob? I know they must be frightened."

Robert hardly heard her, and certainly did not take in the import of her words. With some wonder at his set face and earnest watch along shore, she did not press her wish. He was looking at the belt of fat resinous pines and balsams, dry as chips from the long summer droughts and tropical heats, which extended along from the foot of Armytage's farm even to the cedar swamp; he was feeling that the slight wind was blowing in a fair direction for the burning of this most inflammable fuel, and consequently the endangering of his property on the creek. A point or two from the east of south it blew; proved by the strong resinous smell wafted towards the landing cove.

"Bob, you're forgetting the trout and the tackle," as he jumped ashore, helped her out, and hurried up the beaten path beside the beaver meadow, "Never mind; I want to see Holt," was his answer. "If any man can help, 'tis he."

"Then there is danger!" She still thought of the Daisy Burn people. Before they reached the house, they met Mr. Holt and half a dozen Indians.

"We must burn a patch of brushwood, to deprive the fire of fuel," said the former. "These Indians have done the like on the prairies westward. It is worth trying, at all events."

"Go up to my mother, Linda; there's nothing to be much alarmed for as yet; I hope this plan of Holt's may stop its progress. I'll be at the house as soon as I can, tell her;" and he ran after the others, down to the mouth of the creek, where a strip of alluvial land, covered with bushes and rank grass, interrupted the belt of firs and cedars. Calling in fire as an ally against itself seemed to Robert very perilous; but the calm Indians, accustomed to wilderness exigencies, set about the protective burning at once. The flame easily ran through the dry brushwood; it was kept within bounds by cutting down the shrubs where it might spread further than was desirable. Soon a broad blackened belt lay beside the creek, containing nothing upon which the fire could fasten. Axes were at work to widen it still further.

"The wind has risen very much, Holt," said Robert, as they felt hot currents of air sweep past them.

"Just the result of the rarified atmosphere over the flames," he answered. They spoke little: the impending risk was too awful. For once, the white man submitted himself to the guidance of the red. To prevent the fire from crossing the creek was the great object. The water itself, perhaps a hundred feet wide, would be an ineffectual barrier; such fierce flame would overleap it. Therefore the Indians had burned the left bank, and now proceeded to burn the right. Indomitably self-possessed, cool, and silent, they did precisely what met the emergency, without flurry or confusion.

All this time the fire was advancing behind the green veil of woods. Volumes of thick smoke were borne off across the pond, alarming the dwellers in distant shanties and oases of clearing, with suggestion of the most terrific danger that can befall a settler in the bush. Before sunset the conflagration came in sight of Cedar Creek. Marching resistlessly onward, to the sound of great detonations of crashing and crackling timber, and its own vast devouring roar, the mighty fire presented a front of flame thirty feet higher than the tree tops. Daylight went down before that huge glare. The low hanging clouds were crimsoned with a glow, not from the sinking sun, but from the billows of blaze beneath. As the dusk deepened, the terrors of the scene intensified by contrast, though in reality the triumphant fire recoiled from that blackened space fringing the stream, where it must die for want of fuel.

To prevent its spreading up to the concession line, and catching the forest there, and perhaps destroying the whole township, all the men in the neighbourhood had assembled to cut down trees, and leave a barrier of vacancy. If the wind had not been blowing from that direction, it is improbable that their endeavours would have been sufficient to keep back the burning. The crest-fallen Captain Armytage, author of all the mischief, wielded an axe among them. Truly he had created a view of black smoking poles and cheerful charcoal vistas before his dwelling. Whether that were better than the utilitarian Scotchman's green woods, he did not say just now, nor have spirit even to answer Davidson's sarcastic remarks on his "muckle clearin'."

Far into the night, the great gaunt boles of trees stood amid wreathing flame. When all risk was over that it would communicate further, and destroy the garden or the house, Robert and the rest could admire its magnificence, and Sam Holt could tell of other forest-burnings of which he had heard, especially of the great fire which occurred in the year 1825, and consumed about two hundred square miles of woods on the Miramichi River in New Brunswick, left fourteen houses standing in the town of Newcastle, and destroyed five hundred people. Two thousand were thus reduced to pauperism.

"Such things are never heard of in Europe. Why are these forests more inflammable than those in the old world?" asked Mr. Wynn the elder.

"Because the drought and heat of the climate are so much greater," answered Sam Holt; "and the preponderance of pines, loaded to the end of every leaf and twig with pitch and resin, affords uncommon food for fire."

Then as to the cause; he considered it could never be spontaneous combustion, but always accident, unless, indeed, in an exceptional case like the present, said Mr. Holt, *sotto voce*. Settlers, burning brush heaps, or logging, sometimes permit the flame to run along the ground into the bush; and in dry weather entrance was sufficient. The boundary fences of farms were often consumed in this way, and more extensive mischief might follow.

For days the charred chaos of timber poles and fallen trunks gave forth such heat and flickering flames as to be unapproachable. Zack's Yankee brain had a scheme for utilizing the ashes, if only he had machinery big enough for converting all into potash and pearlash. This man was old Mr. Wynn's special aversion. There was indeed little in common between the well-bred European gentleman, who always, even in these poor circumstances, wore the whitest linen (he never knew how Linda toiled over those neat shirt-fronts and ruffles), and kept up the *convenances* of society in the bush, and had a well-educated range of thought—between all this and the Yankee storekeeper, who wore no linen at all, nor had the faintest idea of the usages of the polite world, nor an idea which might not be paralleled in the mental experience of a rat in a barn. "Get," and "grasp," were the twin grooves of his life.

Unconscious of the antipathy, Zack would saunter up to Cedar Creek sometimes of an evening, and, if not intercepted, would march straight into the parlour where the ladies sat, and fix his feet on the wooden chimney-piece, discharging tobacco juice at intervals into the fire with unerring labial aim. Mr. Wynn's anger at the intrusion signified nothing, nor could a repellent manner be understood by Zack without some overt act, which a strained respect for hospitality prevented on the part of the old gentleman.

"Well, Robert, how you could permit that man to walk with you for the last half hour I do not know." Mr. Wynn stood on the threshold, looking a complete contrast to the shuffling, retreating figure of the lank Yankee striding over to the road.

"I assure you it is not for the pleasure I take in his society, sir; but he gives me useful hints. We were talking just now of potash, and I showed him my new rail-fences; he has rather put me out of conceit with my week's work because it is of basswood, which he says does not hold."

"Are those the rails which I helped to split?"

Be it noticed here that Mr. Wynn the elder could not bear to be totally dependent on his sons, nor to live the life of a *faineant* while they laboured so hard; he demanded some manual task, and believed himself of considerable use, while they had often to undo his work when he turned his back; and at all times the help was chiefly imaginary. No matter, it pleased him; and they loved the dear old gentleman too well to undeceive him.

"As to the potash business, sir, I fear it is too complicated and expensive to venture upon this year, though the creek is an excellent site for an ashery, and they say the manufacture is highly remunerating. What do you think, father?" And they had a conference that diverged far from potash.

After closely watching Davidson's management, and finding that he realized twenty-eight shillings per hundred-weight, Robert resolved to try the manufacture. Details would be tedious. Both reader and writer might lose themselves in leach-tubs, ash-kettles, and coolers. The "help," Liberia, proved herself valuable out-of-doors as well as indoors at this juncture; for Mrs. Zack's principle of up-bringing was that young folk should learn to turn their hand to 'most everythin'. And Libby, a large plump girl with prodigiously red cheeks and lips, had profited so far by her training as to be nearly as clever in the field as in the kitchen. Her great strength was a constant subject of admiration to Andy, though the expression of any such sentiment was met by unmitigated scorn on the lady's part.

"Why, thin, Miss Green, an' it's yerself has the beautifullest arm, all to nothin', that ever I see; an' it's mottled brown with freckles, an' as big as a blacksmith's anyhow. Och, an' look how she swings up the potash kettle as light as if it was only a stone pot: musha, but yer the finest woman, my darlin', from this to yerself all round the world agin!"

"I guess, Mister Handy, if yer was to bring some logs, an' not to stand philanderin' thar, 'twould be a sight better," rejoined Miss Liberia, sourly.

"Look now," answered Andy; "ye couldn't make yerself ugly, musthore, not if ye wor thryin' from this till then, so ye needn't frown; but ye're very hard-hearted intirely on a poor orphant like me, that has nayther father nor mother, nor as much as an uncle, nor a cousin near me itself. Though sorra bit o' me but 'ud sooner never have one belongin' to me than thim out-an-out disgraceful cousins of yer own at the 'Corner.'"

Libby was immovable by this as by any other taunt, to all appearance. "Throth, I thried her every way," quoth Andy, subsequently, after an experience of some months; "I thried her by flatthery an' by thruth-tellin', by abusin' her relations an' herself, an' by praisin' 'em, by appalin' to her compassion an' by bein stiff an' impident, an' I might as well hould me tongue. A woman that couldn't be coaxed wid words, I never seen afore."

Perhaps she was the better servant for this disqualification; at all events, she had no idea of any nonsense keeping her from the full discharge of her duties in the house. Her propensity to call the gentlemen by their baptismal names, without any respectful prefix, was viewed by Linda as a very minor evil when set off against strength and willing-heartedness. But one day that she wanted her young mistress, and abruptly put her head into the parlour, asking, in a strong tone, "Whar's Linda? Tell her the men that's settin' the fall wheat 'll be 'long in no time for dinner," Mr. Wynn could have turned her away on the spot.

"Wal! sure it ain't no sin to forget the 'miss' of an odd time, I guess," was the large damsel's rejoinder, though without the least spice of sauciness. "Come, I hain't no time to be spendin' here;" and she closed the door after her with a bang which made gentle Mrs. Wynn start. There was some trouble in convincing her husband that it was only the servant's rough manner—no real disrespect was intended; the incident put him into low spirits for the day, and turned many a backward thought upon the wealth of his youth.

He would say, in these downcast moods, that Canada was no place for the gentleman emigrant; but could he point out any colony *more* suited? Also, that his sons earned daily bread by harassing toil, worse than that of a bricklayer or day labourer at home; but were they not happier than in pursuit of mere pastime, like thousands of their equals in the province they had left? Robert would certainly have answered in the affirmative. Arthur's restless spirit less wisely pined for the pleasure-seeking of such a life as Argent's.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TRITON AMONG MINNOWS.

LINDA was stooping one morning in the corner of her garden. Some precious plant was there, protected from the full glare of the noon sun by a calico shade, carefully adjusted, and with a circle of brown damp about it, which told of attentive watering. A few roundish leaves were the object of all this regard: in the centre of the knot to-day stood a little green knob on a short stem.

"Oh, Georgie! papa! come and look at my daisy; it has actually got a bud."

Master George, nothing loth to have lessons disturbed by any summons, ran round from the open window through the open hall door, and his father followed more slowly to behold the marvel.

"You see, papa, I thought it never would get on, it was such a sickly little thing; but it must be growing strong, or it could not put out a bud. How glad I shall be to see a daisy's face again! I would give all the fragrance of the blue wild iris for one. But, papa, the laurel cuttings are dead, I fear."

They looked very like it, though Mr. Wynn would still give them a chance. He apprehended the extreme dryness of the air might prove too much for the infant daisy also. But Linda would see nothing except promise of prosperity as yet.

"Now, papa, when I am done with my melons, and you have finished Georgie's lessons, I want you to walk down to Daisy Burn with me. I have something to say to Edith."

"With pleasure, my dear. But I have always wondered why that name was given to that farm, except on the principle of *lucus a non*."

After the mid-day dinner they went. Meeting Andy on the road, trudging up from the "Corner" on some message, he informed them that the captain and his son had gone to a cradling bee at Benson's, an English settler a few miles off. "But as to whether 'tis to make cradles they want, or to rock 'em, meself doesn't rightly know."

The fact being that a "cradle," in American farming, signifies a machine for cutting down corn wholesale. It is a scythe, longer and wider than that used in mowing hay, combined with an apparatus of "standard," "snaith," and "fingers," by means of which a single workman may level two acres and a half of wheat or oats in one day.

"Captain Armytage is of a very sociable disposition," remarked Mr. Wynn, after a few steps. "A man fresh from the mess-table and clubs must find the bush strangely unsuitable." He was thinking of certain petty occurrences at his own bee, which demonstrated the gallant officer's weaknesses.

"Oh, papa, did you ever see anything like these vines? Grapes will be as plentiful as blackberries are at home." For along the concession line many trees were festooned with ripening clusters; and deeper in the woods, beyond Linda's ken, and where only the birds and wild animals could enjoy the feast, whole hundred-weights hung in gleams of sunshine. Well might the northmen, lighting upon Canadian shores in one hot summer, many centuries before Cabot or Cartier, name the country Vine-land; and the earliest French explorers up the St. Lawrence call a grape-laden rock the Isle of Bacchus.

"But is it not a wonder, papa," pressed the young lady, "when the cold is so terrible in winter? Do you remember all the endless trouble the gardener at Dunore had to save his vines from the frost? And Robert says that great river the Ottawa is frozen up for five months every year, yet here the grapes flourish in the open air."

"I suppose we are pretty much in the latitude of the Garonne," answered Mr. Wynn, casting about for some cause. "But indeed, Linda, if your Canadian grape does not enlarge somewhat——"

"You unreasonable papa, to expect as fine fruit as in a hothouse or sunny French vineyard. I really see no reason why we Canadians should not have regular vineyards some day, and you would see how our little grapes must improve under cultivation. Perhaps we might make wine. Now, you dear clever papa, just turn your attention to that, and earn for yourself the soubriquet of national benefactor."

Clinging to his arm as they walked, she chattered her best to amuse the sombre mind, so lately uprooted from old habits and ways of life into a mode of existence more or less distasteful. The birds aided her effort with a variety of foreign music. Wood pigeon, bobolink, bluebird, oriole, cooed, and trilled, and warbled, from the bush all around. The black squirrel, fat, sleek, jolly with good living of summer fruits, scampered about the boughs with erect shaggy tail, looking a very caricature upon care, as he stowed away hazel-nuts for the frosty future. Already the trees had donned their autumn coats of many colours; and the beauteous maple-leaves, matchless in outline as in hue, began to turn crimson and gold. The moody man yielded to the sweet influences of nature in a degree, and acknowledged that even this exile land could be enjoyable.

Arriving at the snake fences of Armytage's farm, he said he would go down to the post at the "Corner" for letters, and call in an hour for Linda on his return. She found Edith and Jay working hard as usual. Their employment to day was the very prosaic one of digging potatoes. "What horrid occupation for a lady!" exclaims somebody. Yes; Miss Armytage would have much preferred an afternoon spent in painting flowers, for which she had a talent. But there was no help for such manual labour in this case Don't you imagine her pride suffered before she took part in field work? I think so, by the deep blush that suffused her face when she saw the visitor coming along, though it was only Linda Wynn, who made some not very complimentary reflections on the father and brother whose absence on an amusing expedition permitted this—whose general indolence compelled severe labour from the girls. They were misplaced men, certainly, and had as much business in the bush, with their tastes and habits, and want of self-control, as Zack Bunting would have had in an English drawing room.

Linda had been thinking over a plan, which, when uttered, was proved to have also suggested itself to her friend. Could not something be done in the way of a Sunday school class for the miserable ignorant children at the "Corner"? Now the very rudiments of revealed religion were unknown to them; and to spend an hour or two on the vacant sabbath in trying to teach them some of Heaven's lore, seemed as if it might be the germ of great good. Miss Armytage, naturally not of Linda's buoyant disposition, foresaw abundance of difficulties—the indifference or opposition of parents, the total want of discipline or habits of thought among the young themselves. Still, it was worth trying: if only a single childish soul should be illuminated with the light of life to all eternity, by this means, oh how inestimably worth trying!

Mr. Wynn was seen coming up the clearing. "I know papa has had a letter," exclaimed Linda, "and that it is a pleasant one, by his pleasant face. Confess now, Edith, isn't he the handsomest man you ever saw?"

Her friend laughed at the daughterly enthusiasm, but could have answered in the affirmative, as she looked at his stately gray-crowned figure, and handsome features, lighted with a grave, kind smile as Linda took possession of his left arm—to be nearer his heart, she said. She was not very long in coaxing from him the blue official letter which contained his appointment to the magistracy of the district, about which he pretended not to be a bit pleased.

"And there's some other piece of nonsense in that," said he, taking out a second blue envelope, and addressed to Arthur Wynn, Esquire.

"'Adjutant-General's Office,'" read Linda, from the corner. "His appointment to the militia, I am sure. That good, powerful Mr. Holt!" Even at the name she coloured a little. "He said that he would try and have this done. And I am so glad you are taking your proper footing in the colony, papa. Of course they should make you a magistrate. I should like to know who has the dignified presence, or will uphold the majesty of the law, as well as you?"

"Magistracy and militia—very different in this mushroom society from what they are in the old country," said Mr. Wynn, despairingly.

"Well, papa, I have ambition enough to prefer being chief fungus among the mushrooms, instead of least among any other class. Don't you know how poverty is looked down upon at home? Here we are valued for ourselves, not for our money. See how all the neighbourhood looks up to Mr. Wynn, of Cedar Creek. You are lord-lieutenant of the county, without his commission: these men feel the influence of superior education and abilities and knowledge."

"I verily believe, saucebox, that you think your father fit to be governor-general; or, at least, a triton among the minnows."

"Papa, the fun is, you'll have to marry people now, whenever you're asked. It is part of a magistrate's duty in out-of-the-way places, Mr. Holt says."

"Then I am to consider my services bespoke by the young ladies present, eh?" said Mr. Wynn, making a courtly inclination to Edith and Jay. "With the greatest pleasure."

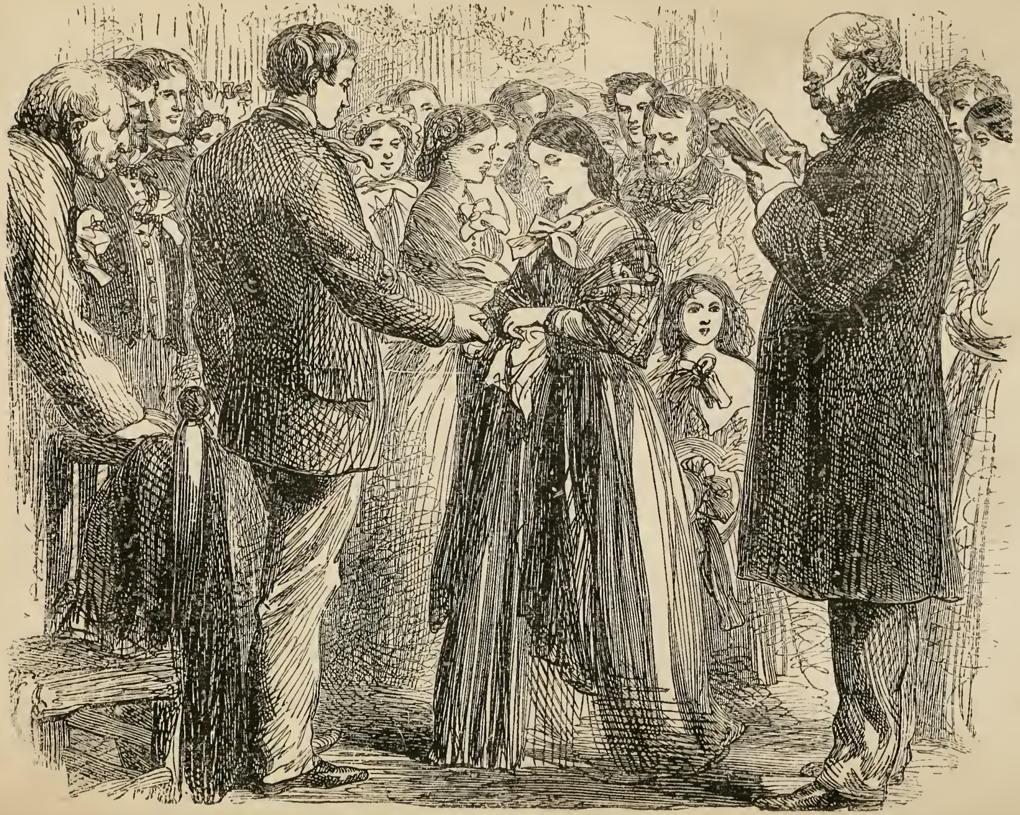
CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PINK MIST.

Mr. Wynn became his magisterial functions well, though exercised after a primitive fashion, without court-house or bench whence to issue his decisions, without clerk to record them, or police force to back them, or any other customary paraphernalia of justice to render his office imposing. To be sure his fine presence was worth a great deal, and his sonorous voice. As Linda predicted, he was obliged to perform clerical duty at times, in so far as to marry folk who lived beyond reach of a clergyman, and had thrice published their intention in the most public part of the township. The earliest of these transactions affianced one of Davidson's lads to a braw sonsie lass, daughter of Benson, the Shropshire settler beyond the "Corner." The bridegroom a tall strapping young fellow of about twenty-three, had a nice cottage ready for his wife, and a partially cleared farm of a hundred acres, on which he had been working with this homestead in view, for the last year and a half. The prudent Scotsman would portion off his other sons in similar respectability as they came of age.

"And yer mither and I cam' here wi' an axe and a cradle," he was wont to say, "eh, Jeanie Davidson?"

He had good cause for gratulation at the wedding that day. His own indomitable industry and energy had raised him from being a struggling weaver in Lanarkshire to be a prosperous landowner in Canada West. He looked upon a flourishing family of sons and daughters round the festive board in Benson's barn, every one of them a help to wealth instead of a diminution to it; strong, intelligent lads, healthy and handy lasses. With scarce a care or a doubt, he could calculate on their comfortable future.



PLEASANT MAGISTERIAL DUTIES IN THE FAR WEST.

"I tell you what, neighbour," cried stout John Benson, from the head of the table, "throw by cold water for once, and pledge me in good whisky to the lucky day that brought us both to Canada."

"Na, na," quoth Davidson, shaking his grizzled head, "I'll drink the toast wi' all my heart, but it must be in gude water. These twenty year back I hae been a temperance man, and hae brought up thae lads to the same fashion; for, coming to Canada, I kenned what ruined mony a puir fallow might weel be the ruin o' me, an' I took a solemn vow that a drap o' drink suld never moisten my lips mair. Sandy Davidson wouldna' be gettin' John Benson's daughter in marriage the day, if it were na' for the cauld water."

Captain Armytage, who never missed a merry-making of any description within a circle of miles, took on himself to reply to this teetotal oration.

It was all very well for Mr. Davidson to talk thus, but few constitutions could bear up against the excessive labour of bush life without proportionate stimulants. For his own part he would sink under it, but for judicious reinforcement of cordials, ordered him by the first medical men in Europe.

"I daur say," replied Davidson, whose keen hard eye had been fixed on the speaker; "I daur say. Ye mak' nae faces at yer medicine, anyhow. It's weel that Zack's store is so handy to Daisy Burn, only I'm thinkin' the last wull go to the first, in the long run."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the Captain, fierily.

"Naething," responded Davidson, coolly—"naething save what e'er the words mean."

"But we were a-goin to drink to Canada, our adopted country," put in Benson, willing to stifle the incipient quarrel—"the finest country on the face of the earth, after Old England."

His stentorian Shropshire lungs supplied a cheer of sufficient intensity, taken up by his guests.

"The country whar we needna' fear factor, nor laird, nor rent-day," shouted Davidson. "We're lairds an' factors here, an' our rent-day comes—never."

"Whirroo!" exclaimed an Irishman, Pat O'Brien, who, having been evicted in his own country, was particularly sensitive as to landlord and tenant-right. "No more agints, nor gales o' rint, nor nothin', ever to pay!"

"Not forgetting the tax-gatherer," interposed portly Mr. Benson. "None of us are partikler sorry to part with him."

Meanwhile the comely bride was sitting with her husband at one side of the table, thankful for the diversion from herself as a topic of enthusiasm and mirth.

"Lads, you'd be a' at the loom, an' your sisters in the factories, only for Canada," said Davidson, now on his legs. "An' I suld be lookin' for'ard to the poor-house as soon as my workin' days were ower; an' Sandy couldna' marry, except to live on porridge an' brose, wi' cauld kail o' sabbath. How wad ye relish that prospect, bonnie Susan?"

Bonnie Susan liked the prospect of the folds of her own silk dress best at that moment, to judge by the determinately downward glance of her eyes.

By-and-by Davidson (for the subject was a favourite one with him) hit upon another of the Canadian advantages as a poor man's land—that the larger a man's family the wealthier was he. No need to look on the little ones as superfluous mouths, which by dire necessity the labourer in mother country is often forced to do; for each child will become an additional worker, therefore an additional means of gain.

"An' if the folk at hame kenned this mair, dinna ye think the emigration wad be thrice what it is, Mr. Robert? Dinna ye think they wad risk the sea an' the strangers, to make a safe future for their bairns? Ay, surely. An' when I think o' the people treading one anither down over the edges o' thae three little islands, while a country as big as Europe stands amaist empty here——"

Mr. Davidson never stated the consequences of his thought; for just then came a universal call to clear the tables, stow away the boards and tressels, and make room for dancing and small plays. The hilarity may be imagined—the boisterous fun of general blindman's buff, ladies' toilet, and all varieties of forfeits. Robert Wynn stole away in the beginning; he had come for an hour, merely to gratify their good neighbour Davidson; but, pressing as was his own farm-work, he found time to spend another hour at Daisy Burn, doing up some garden beds under direction of Miss Edith. She had come to look on him as a very good friend; and he——well, there was some indefinable charm of manner about the young lady. Those peculiarly set grey eyes were so truthful and so gentle, that low musical voice so perfect in tone and inflection, that Robert was pleased to look or listen, as the case might be. But chiefest reason of all—was she not dear Linda's choicest friend and intimate? Did they not confide every secret of their hearts to each other? Ah, sunbeam, Linda knew well that there was a depth of her friend's nature into which she had never looked, and some reality of gloom there which she only guessed.

Perhaps it was about Edith's father, or brother. That these gentlemen neglected their farm business, and that therefore affairs could not prosper, was tolerably evident. Fertile as is Canadian soil, some measure of toil is requisite to evolve its hidden treasures of agricultural wealth. Except from a hired Irish labourer named Mickey Dunne, Daisy Burn farm did not get this requisite. The young man Reginald now openly proclaimed his abhorrence of bush life. No degree of self-control or arduous habits had prepared him for the hard work essential. Most of the autumn he had lounged about the "Corner," except when his father was in Zack's bar, which was pretty often; or he was at Cedar Creek on one pretext or other, whence he would go on fishing and shooting excursions with Arthur.

Meanwhile, Robert's farming progressed well. His fall-wheat was all down by the proper period, fifteenth of September; for it is found that the earlier the seed is sown, the stronger is the plant by the critical time of its existence, and the better able to withstand frost and rust. Complacently he looked over the broad brown space, variegated with charred stumps, which occupied fully a twelfth of the cleared land, and, stimulated by the pleasures of hope, he calculated on thirty-five bushels an acre next summer, as the probable yield. Davidson had raised forty per acre in his first season at Daisy Burn, though he acknowledged that twenty-five was the present average.

The garden stuff planted on Robert's spring-burn ground had flourished; more than two hundred bushels per acre of potatoes were lodged in the root-house, and a quantity of very fine turnips and carrots. Beans had not thriven: he learned that the climate is considered unfavourable for them. The pumpkins planted between his rows of Indian corn had swelled, and swelled, till they lay huge golden balls on the ground, promising abundant dishes of "squash" and sweet pie through the winter.

"How is it that everything thrives with you, Wynn?" young Armytage said one afternoon that he found the brothers busy slitting rails for the fencing of the aforesaid fall-wheat. "I should say the genius of good luck had a special care over Cedar Creek."

"Well, nature has done three-fourths of it," answered Robert, driving in a fresh wedge with his beetle; "for this soil reminds me of some poet's line—'Tickle the earth with a straw, and forth laughs a yellow harvest.' The other quarter of our success is just owing to hard work, Armytage, as you may see."

"I can't stand that," said the young man, laughing: "give me something to do at once;" and he began to split rails also. Linda, coming from the house, found them thus employed—a highly industrial trio.

"I recollect being promised wild plums to preserve," said she, after looking on for a little. "Suppose you get out the canoe, Bob, and we go over to that island where we saw such quantities of them unripe? Now don't look so awfully wise over your wedges, but just consider how I am to have fruit tarts for people, if the fruit is never gathered."

Whether the motive was this telling argument, or that his work was almost finished owing to the additional hand, Robert allowed the beetle to be taken from his fingers and laid aside. "You imperious person! I suppose we must obey you."

The day was one of those which only Canada in the whole world can furnish—a day of the "pink mist," when the noon sun hangs central in a roseate cup of sky. The rich colour was deepest all round the horizon, and paled with infinite shades towards the zenith, like a great blush rose drooping over the earth. Twenty times that morning Linda went from the house to look at it: her eyes could not be satiated with the beauty of the landscape and of the heavens above.

Then, what colours on the trees! As the canoe glided along through the enchanted repose of the lake, what painted vistas of forest opened to the voyagers' sight! what glowing gold islets against an azure background of distant waters and purple shores! what rainbows had fallen on the woods, and steeped them in hues more gorgeous than the imagination of even a Turner could conceive! Shades of lilac and violet deepening into indigo; scarlet flecked with gold and green; the darkest claret and richest crimson in opposition: no tropical forest was ever dyed in greater glory of blossom than this Canadian forest in glory of foliage.

"What can it be, Robert?" asked Linda, after drinking in the delight of colour in a long silent gaze. "Why have we never such magnificence upon our trees at home?"

"People say it is the sudden frost striking the sap; or that there is some peculiar power in the sunbeams—actinic power, I believe 'tis called—to paint the leaves thus; but one thing seems fatal to this supposition, that after a very dry summer the colouring is not near so brilliant as it would be otherwise. I'm inclined to repose faith in the frost theory myself; for I have noticed that after a scorching hot day and sharp night in August, the maples come out in scarlet next morning."

"Now, at home there would be some bald patches on the trees," observed Arthur. "The leaves seem to fall wholesale here, after staying on till the last."

"I have heard much of the Indian summer," said Linda, "but it far exceeds my expectation. An artist would be thought mad who transferred such colouring to his canvas, as natural. Just look at the brilliant gleam in the water all along under that bank, from the golden leafage above it; and yonder the reflection is a vermilion stain. I never saw anything so lovely. I hope it will last a long time, Bob."

That was impossible to say; sometimes the Indian summer was for weeks, sometimes but for a few days; Canadians had various opinions as to its arrival and duration: September, October, or November might have portions of the dreamy hazy weather thus called. As to why the name was given, nobody could tell; except it bore reference to an exploded idea that the haze characteristic of the time of the year arose from the burning of the great grassy prairies far west, by the red men.

"What has become of your colony of Indians?" asked Armytage, "those who lived near the cedar swamp?"

"Oh, they left us in 'the whortleberry moon,' as they call August, and migrated to some region where that fruit abounds, to gather and store it for winter use. They smoke the berries over a slow fire, I am told, and when dry, pack them in the usual birch-bark makaks; and I've seen them mixed with the dough of bread, and boiled with venison or porcupine, or whatever other meat was going, as we would use whole pepper."

"After the whortleberries, they were to go to the rice-grounds."

observed Arthur. "Bob, suppose we paddle over and try for ducks in the rice-beds, to the lee of that island."

Here were some hundred yards of shallow water, filled with the tall graceful plant, named by the Jesuits "folle avoine," and by the English "wild rice." The long drooping ears filled with very large grains, black outside and white within, shook down their contents into the silt at bottom, with every movement which waved their seven-feet stems. Arthur knew it as a noted haunt of wild duck, a cloud of which arose when he fired.

"It was here we met all the pigeons the other day," said he. "Those trees were more like the inside of a feather-bed than anything else, so covered were they with fluttering masses of birds; you couldn't see a bit of the foliage; and 'twas quite amusing to watch some of them lighting on the rice, which wasn't strong enough to support them, and trying to pick out the grains. As they could neither swim nor stand, they must have been thoroughly tantalized. Don't you remember, Armytage?"

But their main business, the plums, must be attended to: the islet was found which was bordered with festoons of them, hanging over the edge in the coves; and after due feasting on the delicious aromatic fruit, they gathered some basketsful. When that was done, it was high time to paddle homewards; the sun was gliding forth from the roseate vault over the western rim, and a silvery haze rose from the waters, softly veiling the brilliant landscape.

"A great improvement to your charcoal forest, it must be owned," said Robert, pointing Armytage to where the sharp black tops of rampikes projected over the mist. The young man did not relish allusions to that folly of his father's, and was silent.

"Oh, Bob, what a pretty islet!" exclaimed Linda, as they passed a rock crested with a few trees, and almost carpeted by the brilliant red foliage of the pyrola, or winter green. "The bushes make quite a crimson wreath round the yellow poplars."

"I think," said Robert, with deliberation, "it would be almost worth the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to see this single day of 'the pink mist.'"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BELOW ZERO.

INDIAN summer was succeeded by the "temps boucaneux," when hoarfrost drooped noiselessly on the night its silver powder on all the dazzling colouring, presenting nature robed in a delicate white guise each morning, which the sun appropriated to himself as soon as he could get above the vapours. Now were the vast waters of Canada passing from a fluid to a solid form, giving out caloric in quantities, accompanied by these thin mists. Towards the close of November, navigation ceases on the Ottawa: the beginning of December sees the mighty river frozen over. Yet it lies in the latitude of Bordeaux! All honour to the benevolent Gulf Stream, which warms France and England comfortably.

When Linda's fingers were particularly cold, she would puzzle Robert and her father with questions as to why this should be so. Mr. Holt once told her that the prevailing wind came from the north-west across a vast expanse of frozen continent and frozen ocean. Also that James's Bay, the southern tongue of Hudson's, was apt to get choked with masses of ice drifted in from the arctic seas, and which, being without a way of escape, just jammed together and radiated cold in company on the surrounding lands.

This explanation was given and received within earshot of a splendid fire, on one of those tremendous January mornings when the temperature is, perhaps, twenty-five degrees below zero, when the very smoke cannot disperse in the frozen atmosphere, and the breath of man and beast returns upon them in snowy particles

Nobody cares to be out of doors, for the air cuts like a knife, and one's garments stiffen like sheet-iron. Linda stands at the window of the little parlour—well she understands now why the hearth was made almost as wide as one side of the room—and looks out on the white world, and on the coppery sun struggling to enlighten the icy heavens; and on that strange phenomenon, the *ver glas*, gleaming from every tree.

"Now, Mr. Holt, as you have been good enough to attempt an explanation of the cold, perhaps you could tell me the cause of the *ver glas?* What makes that thin incrustation of ice over the trunk and every twig, which has been attracting my admiration these three days? It was as if each tree was dressed in a tight-fitting suit of crystal, when the sun succeeded in shining a little yesterday."

"I imagine that the cause was the slight thaw on Monday, and the freezing of the moisture that then covered the bark and branches into a coat of ice. So I only *attempt* explanations, Miss Linda."

"Oh, but it is not your fault if they are unsatisfactory, as I own that of the north-west winds and James's Bay was to me; it is the fault of science. I'm afraid you'll not answer another question which I have, since I am so ungrateful as not to accept everything you say with becoming reverence."

"Name your question."

"Why is every fourth day milder than the others? Why may we reckon, with almost certainty, on a degree of soft weather to-morrow?"

"Those are the tertian intervals, and nobody understands them."

"Concise and candid, if it doesn't make me wiser; but I'm compensated for that, in finding something of which you are equally ignorant with myself, Mr. Holt."

Remarks of a more superficial character were extorted by the severity of the weather from the inmates of the kitchen.

"Arrah, Miss Libby asthore, wor ye able to sleep one wink last night wid the crackling of the threes? I niver heerd——"

"Sartin sure I was," replied the rubicund damsel, as she moved briskly about her work. She had a peculiarity of wearing very short skirts, lest they should impede her progress; but once that Andy ventured a complimentary joke on her ankles, he met with such scathing scorn that he kept aloof from the subject in future, though often sorely tempted.

"Nothen ever kep me waking," asseverated the Yankee girl with perfect truth. "Now, young man, jest git out o' my way: warm yar hands in yar hair, if you've a mind teu—it's red enough, I guess."

"Throth an' I wish I could take yer advice, Miss; or if you'd give me a few sparks of yer own hot timper, I needn't ever come up to the hearth at all at all."

"Thar, go 'long with you for a consaited sot-up chap, an' bring in a couple of armfuls of wood," said the lady. "I reckon you'd best take care of yar hair settin' fire to the logs, Mister Handy," she added with a chuckle.

Linda entered the kitchen on some household business, and Mr. Callaghan was too respectful to retort in her presence. But this is a specimen of the odd sort of sparring which Arthur chose to consider courtship, and to rally both parties about.

"Deed then I hope tisn't the likes of a crooked stick of her kind I'd be afther bringin' home at long last," Andy would say, wielding his axe with redoubled vigour.

"I guess I ain't agoin' jest to be sich a soft un as to take the care of *him* for nothen'," the lady would say, flouncing about her kitchen, and laying ineffable emphasis on the last word. Whence it would appear that the feud was irreconcilable.

Next day was bright, and the mercury had climbed nearer to zero; so the sleigh was had out—Mr. Holt's sleigh, which had brought him from Mapleton to Cedar Creek, and was very much at every body's service while he remained. Linda dressed in her warmest attire, and prepared for a run to the "Corner" with her father. The sleigh was but a "cutter," for carrying two, and had handsome robes of its equipment, a pair for each seat; one of wolf-skins garnished with a row of tails at the bottom and lined with scarlet; another a bearskin, in which the beast's grim countenance had been preserved, and his claws affixed as a fringe. When Linda was comfortably wrapped up, Mr. Holt produced a third robe, to throw over all.

"What a curious texture! a platted material and yet fur!" she said, looking at it.

"'Tis of Indian manufacture, and I believe is made of rabbit skins cut in strips, twisted and netted together so as to keep the hair outside on both surfaces. You have a lovely day for your trip; I hope you will enjoy it."

Did she not? A large set-off against the severity of a Canadian winter should be the ecstatic pleasures of sleighing. Those who have not tasted it know not the highest bliss of movement. Gliding smoothly and rapidly over the solid snow to the tinkling music of bells, the motion alone has something in it most exhilarating, to say nothing of the accompaniments of the ride, the clear bracing air, the beauty of the frost-bound forests all around. Linda was determined that her friend Edith should have her share of the enjoyment this brilliant day: so, stopping the "steel-shod sleigh" at Daisy Burn, she persuaded Miss Armytage to don her cloak and muffetees and warm hood, and take her place beside Mr. Wynn for the rest of the way to the "Corner" and back.

Edith had been in the midst of ironing her father's and brother's linen, while Jay read aloud. As soon as she was gone, despite the protestations of the little girl, Linda took the smoothing iron herself, and continued the work merrily. While thus engaged, and Jay getting through her history lesson still, a scratching was heard at the outside door of the kitchen.

"That's Ponto; what can have brought him home? he went with Reginald to chop at the edge of the clearing."

The dog was no sooner admitted than he jumped on them both, pulled their gowns, ran back whining, and repeated these movements many times.

"He wants us to go with him, Jay—don't you think so?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CUT, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

What could be the matter? Ponto, at all events, seemed to think it of much importance, for he never ceased to pull their skirts and whine an entreaty, and go through the pantomime of running off in a great hurry—never further than the threshold—until he saw the girls put on their cloaks and hoods. Gravely he sat on his tail, looking at them with patient eyes, and, when the door was opened, sprang off madly towards the pond.

"Could Reginald have sent him for anything? Something might have happened to Reginald. Ponto never came home in that way before. Could a tree have fallen on Reginald?" and Jay's small hand shivered in Linda's at the thought. They hurried after the dog, over the spotless surface of snow, into the charred forest, where now every trunk and bough of ebony seemed set in silver. Thither Reginald had gone to chop at noon, in a little fit of industry. They were guided to the spot by the sad whinings of faithful Ponto, who could not comprehend why his master was lying on the ground, half against a tree, and what meant that large crimson stain deepening in the pure snow.

A desperate axe-cut in his foot—this was the matter. Linda almost turned sick at the sight; but Jay, compressing her white lips very firmly, to shut in a scream, kneeled down by her brother.

He had succeeded, with infinite effort, in drawing off his long leathern boot through which the axe had penetrated, and had been trying to bind his neckcloth tightly above the ankle. Jay helped him with all her little strength.

"Give me a stick," said he hoarsely—"a strong stick;" Linda flew to find one. "Something to make a tourniquet;" and, not readily seeing any wood to answer the want, she used his axe, stained as it was, to chop a branch from the single tree he had felled. She had never tried her strength of arm in this way before; but now the axe felt quite light, from her excitement. Before the stick could be ready, in her unpractised fingers, Jay cried out, "Oh, Linda, he is dying! he has fainted!"

Still, she had common sense to know that the first necessity was to stop the bleeding; so, quieting the little sister by a word or two, she inserted the stick in the bandage above the ankle, and turned it more than once, so as to tighten the ligament materially. Looking at the pallid features, another thought struck her.

"Let us heap up snow round the wounded foot and leg; I'm sure the cold must be good for it;" and, with the axe for their only shovel, the two girls gathered a pile of frozen snow, as a cushion and covering to the limb—"Oh, if Edith were here! if Edith were here!" being Jay's suppressed cry.

"Where is the labourer whom I saw working on the farm?"

"Gone away; discharged last week. Papa said he couldn't afford to pay him any longer. That's why Reginald went out to chop to-day. Oh, Linda, I wish somebody came. He is lying so white and still: are you sure he is not dead?"

His head was on the little sister's lap, and Linda chafed the temples with snow. Would the sleigh-bells ever be heard? She longed for help of some sort. As to surgery, there was not a practitioner within thirty miles. What could be done with such a bad hurt as this without a surgeon?

A universal slight shudder, and a tremor of the eyelids, showed that consciousness was returning to the wounded man. Almost at the same instant Ponto raised his head, and ran off through the trees, whining. A man's footsteps were presently heard coming rapidly over the crisp snow. It was Mr. Holt: and a mountain load of responsibility and dread was lifted from Linda's mind at the sight of him. This was not the first time that she had felt in his presence the soothing sense of confidence and restfulness.

He could not help praising them a little for what they had done with the primitive tourniquet and the styptic agency of the snow. Beyond tightening the bandage by an additional twist or two of the inserted stick, he could do nothing more for the patient till he was removed to the house; but he began collateral help by cutting poles for a litter, and sent Jay and Linda for straps of basswood bark to fasten them together. When the sleigh at last came up the avenue, Mr. Wynn the elder helped him to carry young Armytage home, wherein Sam Holt's great physical strength carefully bore two-thirds of the dead weight.

It seemed that he had been chopping up that fir for firewood, perhaps without giving much thought to his work, when the axe, newly sharpened before he came out, caught in a crooked branch, which diverted almost the whole force of the blow on his own foot. Well was it that Mr. Holt, in his erratic education, had chosen to pry into the mysteries of surgery for one session, and knew something of the art of putting together severed flesh and bone; although many a dreadful axe-wound is cured in the backwoods by settlers who never heard of a diploma, but nevertheless heal with herbs and bandages, which would excite the scornful mirth of a clinical student.

Thus began a long season of illness and weakness for the young man, so recently in the rudest health and strength. It was very new to his impetuous spirit, and very irksome, to lie all day in the house, not daring to move the injured limb, and under the shadow of Zack Bunting's cheerful prediction, that he guessed the young fellar might be a matter o' six or eight months a-lyin thar, afore such a big cut healed, ef he warn't lamed for life.

Reginald chafed, and grumbled, and sulked, for many a day; but the fact could not be gainsaid; those divided veins and tendons and nerves must take long to unite again; Mr. Holt found him one morning in such an unquiet mood.

"Armytage," said he, after the usual attentions to the wound, "I suppose you consider this axe-cut a great misfortune?"

"'Misfortune!'" and he rose on his elbow in one of the fifty positions he was wont, for very restlessness, to assume. "Misfortune! I should think I do: nothing much worse could have happened. Look at the farm, without a hand on it, going to rack and ruin——"

Rather a highly coloured picture; and Reginald seemed to forget that, while his limbs were whole, he had devoted them almost entirely to amusement. Mr. Holt heard him out patiently.

"I should not be surprised if it proved one of the best events of your life," he observed; "that is, if you will allow it to fulfil the object for which it was sent."

"Oh that's your doctrine of a particular Providence," said the other peevishly, lying back again.

"Yes; my doctrine of a particular Providence, taught in every leaf of the Bible. Now, Armytage, look back calmly over your past life, and forward, whither you were drifting, and see if the very kindest thing that could be done for you by an all-wise and all-loving God was not to bring you up suddenly, and lay you aside, and *force* you to think. Beware of trying to frustrate his purpose."

Mr Holt went away immediately on saying that, for he had no desire to amuse Reginald with an unprofitable controversy which might ensue, but rather to lodge the one truth in his mind, if possible. Young Armytage thought him queer and methodistical; but he could not push out of his memory that short conversation. Twenty times he resolved to think of something else, and twenty times the dismissed idea came round again, and the calm forcible words visited him, "Beware of trying to frustrate God's purpose."

At last he called to his sister Edith, who was busy at some housework in the kitchen, across a little passage.

"Come here; I want to ask you a question. Do you think that I am crippled as a punishment for my misdeeds, idleness, etcetera?"

"Indeed, I do not," she answered with surprise. "What put such a thought into your head?"

"Holt said something like it. He thinks this axe-cut of mine is discipline—perhaps like the breaking-in which a wild colt requires; and as you and he are of the same opinion in religious matters, I was curious to know if you held this dogma also."

She looked down for a moment. "Not quite as you have represented it," she said. "But I do think that when the Lord sends peculiar outward circumstances, he intends them to awake the soul from indifference, and bring it to see the intense reality of invisible things. Oh, Reginald," she added, with a sudden impulse of earnestness, "I wish you felt that your soul is the most precious thing on earth."

He was moved more than he would have cared to confess, by those tearful eyes and clasped hands; he knew that she went away to pray for him, while about her daily business. More serious thoughts than he had ever experienced were his that afternoon: Jay could not avoid remarking—in private—on his unusual quietude. Next morning he found a Bible beside his bed, laid there by Edith, he had no doubt; but for a long time she could not discover whether he ever looked into it.

When Mr. Holt left the country, he gave Robert Wynn charge of the patient mentally as well as corporeally. He knew that Robert's own piety would grow more robust for giving a helping hand to another.

Somehow, the Yankee storekeeper was very often hanging about

Daisy Burn that winter. Captain Armytage and he were great friends. That gallant officer was, in Zack's parlance, "the Colonel, which brevet-rank I suppose was flattering, as it was never seriously disclaimed. He was king of his company in the tavern bar at the "Corner;" and few days passed on which he did not enjoy that bad eminence, while compounding "brandy-smash," "rum-salad," "whisky-skin," or some other of the various synonyms under which the demon of drink ruins people in Canada.

But where did the Captain find cash for this? The fact is, he never paid in ready money; for that was unknown to his pockets, and very rare in the district. He paid in sundry equivalents of produce; and a nice little mortgage might be effected on his nice little farm of Daisy Burn, if needs be. Zack held his greedy grasping fingers over it; for the family were obliged to go a good deal in debt for sundry necessities. Slave and scrape as Miss Armytage might, she had no way of raising money for such things as tea and coffee. Once she attempted to make dandelion roots, roasted and ground, do duty for the latter; but it was stigmatized as a failure, except by loving little Jay. Then, wages must be paid to the Irish labourer, whose services to chop wood, etc., were now absolutely necessary. Meat was another item of expense. A large store of potatoes was almost the sole provision upon which the household could reckon with certainty; mismanagement and neglect had produced the usual result of short crops in the foregoing season, and their wheat went chiefly to the store, in barter.

"An' ef Zack ain't shavin' the Capting, I guess I'm a Dutchman," remarked a neighbouring settler to Robert. "I reckon a matter of two year'll shave him out o' Daisy Burn, clear and clean."

But its owner had some brilliant scheme in the future for lifting him free of every embarrassment. Rainbow tints illuminated all prospective pages of Captain Armytage's life.

"Edith, my dear," he would say, if that young lady deprecated any fresh expenditure, or ventured an advice concerning the farm

—"Edith, my dear, the main fault of your character is an extraordinary want of the sanguine element, for the excess of which I have always been so remarkable. You know I compare it to the life-buoy, which has held me up above the most tempestuous waves of the sea of existence, eh! But you, my poor dear girl, have got a sad way of looking at things—a gloomy temperament, I should call it perhaps, eh? which is totally opposite to my nature. Now, as to this beast, which Mr. Bunting will let me have for twenty-eight dollars, a note-of-hand at three months, he is kind enough to say, will do as well as cash. And then, Reginald, my boy, we need drink *café noir* no longer, but can have the proper *café au lait* every morning."

"I don't know who is to milk the cow, sir," said his son, rather bluntly. "Edith is overwhelmed with work already."

"Ah, poor dear! she is very indefatigable." He looked at her patronizingly, while he wiped his well-kept moustache in a handkerchief which she had washed. "Indeed, Edith, I have sometimes thought that such continual exertion as yours is unnecessary. You should think of us all, and spare yourself, my child."

"I do, papa," she answered: whether that she thought of them all, or that she spared herself, she did not explain. Her brother knew which it was.

"That is right, my child. It grieves me to see you condescending to menial offices, unsuitable to your rank and position."

She did not ask—as a less gentle nature would have asked—who else was to be the menial, if not she?

"That is the worst of a bush life. If I had known how difficult it is to retain one's sphere as a gentleman, I think I should not have exposed myself to the alternative of pecuniary loss, or debasing toil. Perhaps it would be well to walk down to the 'Corner' now and conclude that bargain with our good friend the storekeeper, eh? Is there anything I can do for either of you, eh? Don't hesitate to command me," he added, blandly. "What! you want nothing? A very fortunate pair—very fortunate, indeed, eh?" And Captain Armytage kissed hands out of the room.

"Edith," said her brother, after a pause of some minutes, "my father will be ruined by his confidence in that man. Bunting can twine him round his finger. I am ashamed of it."

She shook her head sadly. But there was no help for the fact that their father was in the toils already; unless, indeed, the debt could be paid off, and the acquaintanceship severed. Hopeless! for the tendencies of a life cannot be remodelled in a day, except by the power of Divine grace.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES.

Sleighing was good that year, till the middle of March. Before the season was past, Captain Argent paid a flying visit on his way to the hunting grounds, as usual, and on his return found something so pleasant in the household at Cedar Creek, that he remained many days.

They were all old acquaintances, to be sure, and had many subjects of interest in common. Mr. Wynn the elder, who, perhaps, was imbued with a little of the true Briton's reverence for aristocracy, was pleased to entertain his former neighbour, Lord Scutcheon's son, especially when that young officer himself was endowed with such a frank, genial bearing, as rendered him almost a universal favourite.

Had there ever been more than mere pleasant acquaintanceship between him and Miss Wynn? Rightly or wrongly, Sam Holt fancied it the case. He heard many allusions to former times and incidents, not knowing that as children they had been playmates. The gallant captain's present admiration was pretty plain; and the young lady was amused by it after the manner of her sex. Being very downright himself, Mr. Holt had no idea how much admiration is required to fill the measure of a proposal of marriage, in a red-coat's resolve, or how much harmless coquetry lies dormant in the sweetest woman.

The precipitate gentleman leaped to sundry conclusions, gathered himself and his fur robes into his cutter, and left on the third day of Captain Argent's visit. In her secret heart, I imagine that Linda knew why.

But an engrossing affair to her at this period was the concealment from their visitor of the decidedly active part she took in household duties. Innocent Captain Argent was unaware that the faultless hot bread at breakfast was wrought by her hands; that the omelets and ragoûts at dinner owned her as cook; that the neatness of the little parlour was attributable to her as its sole housemaid. The mighty maiden called Liberia had enough to do in other departments, outdoor as well as indoor, besides being rather a ponderous person for a limited space.

And so, when Captain Argent one morning pushed open the parlour door long before he ought to have left his apartment, he beheld a figure with short petticoats, wrapt in a grey blouse, and having a hood of the same closely covering her hair, dusting away at the chairs and tables and shelves, with right goodwill.

"Now, Georgie, you know that you can't sit here till I have quite finished," said the figure, without turning its head. "Like a good boy, ask Libby to come and build up the fire: ask gently, remember, or she'll not mind you."

The noiseless manner of closing the door caused her first to doubt the identity of the person spoken to, and a very vivid crimson dyed her cheeks, when, Liberia coming in, her blacksmith arms laden with logs, she threw them down with resounding clatter, and said, "Wal, ef that ain't the nicest, soft speakin'est gentleman I ever see! He asked me as perlite for the wood, as he couldn't be perliter ef I war Queen Victōry herself."

"How fortunate that I didn't turn round my head," thought Linda, her first confusion over; "for of all horridly unbecoming things, showing no hair about one's face is the worst."

Whence it will be seen that Miss Wynn was not exempt from female vanity.

To the cat thus let out of the bag, Captain Argent made no further allusion than was involved in a sudden fondness for the nursery tale of Cinderella. Every subject of conversation introduced for the morning was tinged by that fairy legend, which tinged Linda's countenance also, rose-colour. Mr. Wynn the elder was slightly mystified; for the topics of promotion by purchase in the army, and the emigration of halfpay officers, seemed to have no leading reference to the above world-famed story.

The dear old gentleman! he did the honours of his small wooden cottage at Cedar Creek as finely as if it had been his own ancestral mansion of Dunore. Their delf cups might have been Dresden, the black ware teapot solid silver, the coarse table-cloth damask —for the very air which he spread around the breakfast arrangements. One might have fancied that he infused an orange-pekoe flavour into the rough muddy congou for which Bunting exacted the highest price. He did not know that the coffee, which he strongly recommended to his guest, was of native Canadian growth, being to all intents and purposes dandelion roots; for you see they were obliged to conceal many of their contrivances from this grand old father. I doubt if he was aware that candles were made on the premises: likewise soap, by Liberia's energetic hands. The dandelion expedient was suggested by thrifty Mrs. Davidson, who had never bought a pound of coffee since she emigrated; and exceedingly well the substitute answered, with its bitter aromatic flavour, and pleasant smell. If Captain Argent had looked into the little house closet, he would have seen a quantity of brownish roots cut up and stored on a shelf. Part of Linda's morning duty was to chop a certain quantity of these to the size of beans, roast them on a pan, and grind a cupful for breakfast. They cost nothing but the trouble of gathering from among the potato heaps, when the hills were turned up in autumn, and a subsequent washing and spreading in the sun to dry.

Mrs. Davidson would also fain have introduced peppermint and sage tea; but even Zack's bad congou was declared more tolerable than those herb drinks, which many a settler imbibes from year to year.

"Throth, an' there's no distinction o' thrades at all in this counthry," said Andy; "but every man has to be a farmer, an' a carpinther, an' a cobbler, an' a tailor, an' a grocer itself! There's Misther Robert med an iligant shute o' canvas for the summer; an' Misther Arthur is powerful at boots; an' sorra bit but Miss Linda spins yarn first-rate, considherin' she never held a distaff before. An' the darlin' missus knits stockins; oh mavrone, but she's the beautiful sweet lady intirely, that ought to be sitting in her carriage!"

News arrived from Dunore this spring, which Linda fancied would sorely discompose Andy. The Wynns kept up a sort of correspondence with the old tenantry, who loved them much. In an April letter it was stated that the pretty blue-eyed Mary Collins, Andy's betrothed, had been base enough to marry another, last shrovetide. But the detaching process had gone on at this side of the Atlantic also. Linda was amazed at the apathy with which the discarded lover received the intelligence. He scratched his red head, and looked somewhat bewildered; indulged in a few monosyllable ejaculations, and half an hour afterwards came back to the parlour to ask her "if she was in airnest, to say that over agin."

"Poor fellow! he has not yet comprehended the full extent of his loss," thought the young lady, compassionately. She broke the news to him once more, and he went away without a remark.

When Arthur came in, she would beg of him to look after the poor suffering fellow. The request was on her lips at his appearance, but he interrupted her with:—

"What do you think of that scamp, Andy, proposing for Libby in my hearing? The fellow told her that his heart was in her keeping, and that she was the light of his life, and grew quite poetical, I assure you; in return for which, he was hunted round the wood-yard with a log!"

And Linda's sympathy expired.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SETTLER THE SECOND.

Next summer brought a scourge of frequent visitation to the "Corner." Lake fever and ague broke out among the low-lying log-houses, and Zack's highly adulterated and heavily priced drugs came into great demand. He was the furthest west adventurer at that date who took upon him to supply apothecary's wares among the threescore and ten other vendibles of a backwoods store. So the ill wind which blew hot fits and cold fits to everybody else blew profit into Zack's pockets.

The population had swelled somewhat since our first introduction to this little pioneer settlement. The number of wooden huts mottling the cleared space between the forest and the river edge, clustering, like bees round their queen, about the saw and grist-mill, had increased during the last two years by some half-score—a slow rate of progression, as villages grow in Canada; but the "Corner" had a position unfavourable to development. An aguish climate will make inhabitants sheer off speedily to healthier localities. No sensible emigrant will elect to live on a marshy site where he can help it. The value of the "Corner" was just now as a stage on the upper branch of that great western highway, whose proper terminus lies no nearer than the Pacific, and whose course is through the fertile country of future millions of men.

This summer waggon-loads of emigrants and their chattels began to file each month into the bush beyond. Cedar Creek ceased to be furthest west by a great many outlying stations where the axe was gradually letting in light on the dusky forest soil. To these the "Corner" must be the emporium, until some enterprising person set up a store and mills deeper in the wilderness.

The shrewd Davidson saw the country opening about him, and resolved to gather to himself the profit which must accrue to somebody. His first measure was to walk down one evening to the Wynns' farm. A thoroughly good understanding had always existed between these neighbours. Even patrician Mr. Wynn relished the company of the hard-headed Lanark weaver, whose energy and common sense had won him the position of a comfortable landholder in Canada West. Added to which qualifications for the best society Davidson was totally devoid of vulgar assumption, but had sufficient ballast to retain just his own proper footing anywhere.

He found the family assembled in their summer parlour, beneath the handsome butternut tree which Robert's axe had spared, and which repaid the indulgence by grateful shade and continual beauty of leafage. They were enjoying supper in the open air, the balmy evening air afloat with fragrant odours. I say advisedly supper, and not tea: the beverage was a lady's luxury out here, and ill suited hours of foregoing labour. Milk was the staple draught at Cedar Creek meals for all stout workers.

"Gude even, leddies:" and Davidson doffed his bonnet with European courtesy. "Fine weather for loggin' this." Indeed he bore evident grimy and smoky tokens on his clothes that such had been his day's work. Applepie order was a condition of dress which he rarely knew; though he possessed a faultless homespun suit, in which he would have been happy to gang to the kirk on sabbath, were that enjoyment practicable.

English papers had come to hand an hour before; among them a bundle of the provincial print nearest Dunore. Linda had learned not to love the arrival of these. It was a pebble thrown in to trouble their still forest life. The yearning of all hearts for home—why did they never dream of calling Canada home?—was intensified perhaps to painfulness. She could interpret the shadow on her father's brow for days after into what it truly signified; that, however the young natures might take root in foreign soil, he was too old an oak for transplantation. Back he looked on fifty-eight years of life, since he could remember being the petted and cherished heir of Dunore; and now—an exile! But he never spoke of the longing for the old land; it was only seen in his poring over every scrap of news from Britain, in his jealous care of things associated with the past, nay, in his very silence.

Now, the dear old gentleman was letting his tea grow cool beyond all remedy, while, with gold double eyeglass in hand, he read aloud various paragraphs of Irish news. Diverging at last into some question of party politics uppermost at the time, though now, in 1861, extinct as the bones of the iguanodon, he tried to get Davidson interested in the subject, and found him so totally ignorant of even the names of public men as to be a most unsatisfactory listener.

"'Deed, then, Mr. Wynn, to tell you truth, I hae never fashed my head wi' politics sin' I cam' oot to Canada," observed the Scotchman, a little bluntly. "'Twas nae sae muckle gude I gained by't at hame; though I mind the time that a contested election was ane o' my gran' holidays, an' I thought mair o' what bigwig was to get into parliament for the borough than I did o' my ain prospects in life, fule that I was; until I found the bairns comin', an' the loom going to the wall a'thegither before machinery, and politics wouldna mak' the pot boil, nor gie salt to our parritch. So I came oot here, an' left politics to gentlefolk."

Mr. Wynn, rather scandalized at Davidson's want of public spirit, said something concerning a citizen's duty to the state.

"Weel, sir, my thought is, that a mon's first earthly duty is to himsel' and his bairns. When I mind the workin' men at hame, ruggin', an' rivin', an' roarin' themselves hoarse for Mr. This or Sir Somebody That, wha are scramblin' into parliament on their shouthers, while the puir fallows haen't a pound in the warld beyond their weekly wage, an' wull never be a saxpence the better for a' their zeal, I'm thankfu' that mair light was given me to see my ain interest, an' to follow it."

"I hardly wonder at your indifference to the paltry politics of the province," observed the gentleman from the old country, sipping his tea loftily.

"I wish Mr. Hiram Holt heard that speech, sir,". said Robert. "To him Canada is more important than Great Britain by so much as it is larger."

"The citizen of Monaco has similar delusions as to the importance of his petty principality," rejoined Mr. Wynn. "I should rather say there was no political principle among Canadians."

"No, sir, there's none in the backwoods," replied Davidson, with perfect frankness. "We vote for our freends. I'm tauld they hae gran' principles in the auld settlements, an' fecht ane anither first-rate every election. We hae too much to do in the new townships for that sort o' wark. We tak' it a' easy."

Robert remembered a notable example of this political indifference in an election which had taken place since their settlement at Cedar Creek. On the day of polling he and his retainer Andy went down to the "Corner," the latter with very enlarged anticipations of fun, and perchance a "row." His master noticed him trimming a saplin into a splendid "shillelagh," with a slender handle and heavy head as ever did execution in a faction fight upon Emerald soil. The very word election had excited his bump of combativeness. But alas! the little stumpy street was dull and empty as usual: not even the embryo of a mob: no flaring post-bills soliciting votes: the majesty of the people and of the law wholly unrepresented.

"Arrah, Misther Robert, this can't be the day at all at all," said Andy, after a prolonged stare in every direction. "That villain Nim tould us wrong."

"Jacques!" called Robert into the cottage adorned with flowers in front, "is this polling day?"

"Oh, oui," said the little Canadian, running out briskly. "Oui, c'est vat you call le jour de poll. Voilà, over dere de house."

A log-cabin, containing two clerks at two rude desks, was the booth; a few idlers lounged about, whittling sticks and smoking, or reading some soiled news sheets. Andy looked upon them with vast disdain.

"An' is this what ye call a 'lection in America?" said he. "Where's the vothers, or the candidates, or the speeches, or the tratin,' or the colours, or the sojers, or anythink at all? An' ye can't rise a policeman itself to kape the pace! Arrah, let me out ov this home, Misther Robert. There's not as much as a single spark ov sperit in the whole counthry!"

So he marched off in high dudgeon. His master stayed a short while behind, and saw a few sturdy yeomen arrive to exercise the franchise. Their air of agricultural prosperity, and supreme political apathy, contrasted curiously with young Wynn's memories of the noisy and ragged partisans in home elections. It was evident that personal character won the electoral suffrage here in the backwoods, and that party feeling had scarce an influence on the voters.

The franchise is almost universal throughout Canada. In 1849 it was lowered to thirty dollars (six pounds sterling) for freeholders, proprietary, or tenantry in towns, and to twenty dollars (four pounds) in rural districts. This is with reference to the hundred and thirty representatives in the Lower House of the Provincial Legislature. The members of the indissoluble Upper House, or Legislative Council, are also returned at the rate of twelve every two years, by the forty-eight electoral divisions of the province.

But to come back to our family party under the butternut tree. Robert related the above anecdote of Andy's disappointment; and from it old Mr. Wynn and Davidson branched off to a variety of cognate topics.

"Noo, I'll confess," said the Scotchman, "that the municipal elections hae an interest for me far aboon thae ithers. The council in my township can tax me for roads, an' bridges, an' schules: that's what I call a personal and practical concern. Sae I made nae manner of objection to bein' one of the five councillors mysel'; and they talk of electin' you too, Maister Robert."

Robert shook his head at the honour.

"I hae a fancy mysel' for handlin' the purse strings wherever I can," added Davidson. "Benson will be the neist town-reeve, as he has time to be gaun' to the county council, which I couldna do. But noo, will ye tak' a turn round the farm?"

Plucking a sprig from an ash-leaved sugar maple close by, according to a habit he had of twisting something in his lips during intervals of talk, Mr. Davidson walked down the slope with Robert. While they are discussing crops, with the keen interest which belongs not to amateurs, we may enlighten the reader somewhat concerning the municipal system of self-government in which the shrewd Mr. Davidson professed his interest. Nowhere is it so perfect as in Canada. Each district has thorough control over its own affairs. Taxation, for the purpose of local improvement or education, is levied by the town or county councils, elected by the dwellers in each township. No byelaw for raising money can be enforced, unless it has previously been submitted to the electors or people. The town council consists of five members, one of whom is town-reeve; the town-reeves form the county council; and the presiding officer elected by them is called the warden. From the completeness of the organization, no merely local question can be brought before the provincial legislature, and it would be well if Imperial Parliament could, by similar means, be relieved of an immense amount of business, inconsistent with its dignity.

"Eh! what's this?" asked Davidson, stopping before the partially raised walls of a wooden cottage. "Wha's gaun to live here?"

"Don't you recollect my town plot?" asked Robert. "My first tenant sets up here. Jackey Dubois is removing from the 'Corner:' he was always getting the ague in that marshy spot, and isn't sorry to change."

"Then that brings me richt down on what I hae been wantin' to say," quoth Davidson. "If ye'll gie us the site, me an' my son Wat wull build a mill."

"With all my heart: a grist or a saw mill?"

"May be baith, if we could raise the cash. Nae doot the saw-mill's the proper to begin wi', seein' yer toun's to be builded o' wood——"

"For the present," observed Mr. Wynn; "but there's plenty of limestone under that hardwood ridge."

"An' the finest water power in the township rinnin' a' to waste on top of it. Weel, noo, I'm glad that's settled; though 'twull be an awfu' expense first cost. I dinna exactly ken how to overtake it."

Robert imagined that he was magnifying matters, in order to lessen any possible demand of ground-rent. But it is probable that Davidson would have even paid something over and above his ideas of equitable, for the pleasure of Zack Bunting's anticipated mortification at finding a rival mill set up in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XL.

AN UNWELCOME SUITOR.

When the affair of the mill was arranged, and Robert's mind's eye beheld it already built and noisily flourishing, they sauntered along the bend of the pond towards where the charcoal forest of last autumn had donned a thin veil of greenery. The sight set Davidson upon his favourite irritation—the decay of his farm, Daisy Burn, under its present owner.

"He's an a'thegither gude-for-naething," was his conclusion respecting Captain Armytage. "Such men as he hae nae mair business settlin' in the bush than he wad hae in tryin' the life o' a fish. A mon may come without land, or money, or freends, an I'll warrant him to get on; but there's ane thing he must hae, the willingness to work hard. That wull bring him the lands, and money, and freends, as plenty as blackberries. Sae far as I can see, your gentlefolk dinna do weel in the bush; they're ower proud to tak' to the axe and the hoe as they ought, an' they hae maistly fine habits o' life that mak' them unhappy. I wad like to see the Captain or his son cobblin' their ain shoon! Though I'm tauld the young fellow's greatly improved sin' his hurt; but that winna mak' him handier."

"He is much more industrious," said Robert, "and I hope will be able to pull up affairs on the farm, even yet."

"Na, sir, na! Zack Bunting's got his claw on it in the shape of a mortgage, already. That farm o' his below the 'Corner' he grasped in just the same way; put the owner in debt to the store, foreclosed the mortgage, and ruined the puir man. I ken he has his eye on Daisy Burn for Nim, ever sin' he saw the Captain. And that Yankee cam' here, Maister Robert, without as much as a red cent aboon the pack on his back!"

Just then Arthur and George came in sight round the lee of a small island, paddling swiftly along.

"Trolling for black bass and maskelongé," remarked Robert. "There! he has a bite."

Arthur's line, some seventy or eighty feet long, was attached to his left arm as he paddled, which gave a most tempting tremulousness to the bait—a mock-mouse of squirrel fur; and a great pike-like fish, lying deep in the clear water, beheld it and was captivated. Slowly he moved towards the charmer, which vibrated three or four feet beneath the surface; he saw not the treacherous line, the hook beneath the fur; his heavily under-jawed mouth (whence he obtained the name of masque-longue, misspelled continually in a variety of ways by his Canadian captors), his tremendous teeth, closed voraciously on the temptation. Arthur's arm received a sudden violent jerk, from the whole force of a lively twenty-five pound maskelongé; a struggle began, to be ended successfully for the human party by the aid of the gaff-hook.

This was the noblest prey of the pond. Pickerel of six or seven pounds were common; and a profusion of black bass-spotted trout in all the creeks; sheepheads and suckers *ad libitum,* the last named being the worst fish of Canada. George thought the success far too uniform for sport; Arthur hardly cared to call the killing of God's creatures "sport," during some time back.

"Davidson, here's a contribution for your bee," cried Arthur, holding up the prize by its formidable snout. "For your good wife, with my compliments."

Mrs. Davidson was in the thick of preparations for a logging-bee, to be held two days subsequently, and whither all the Cedar Creek people were invited. Every settler's wife's housekeeping is brought to a severe test on such occasions, and the huge maskelongé was a most acceptable addition.

The four gentlemen and Mr. Callaghan went with their team of oxen to help their good neighbour on the appointed morning.

It might have been four hours afterwards that Linda was working in her garden, hoeing a strawberry bed, and singing to herself some low song, when, attracted by a slight movement at the fence, she raised her eyes. Mr. Nimrod Bunting was leaning against the rails.

"I guess you may go on, Miss," said he, showing all his yellow teeth. "I've been admirin' yar voice this quarter of an hour past. I've never happened to hear you sing afore; and I assure you, Miss, I'm saying the truth, that the pleasure is highly gratifyin.'"

Linda felt greatly inclined to put down her hoe and run into the house; but that would be so ridiculous. She hoed on in silence, with a very displeased colour on her cheek.

"I see all yar people at the bee: yar too high yarself to go to them kind'er meetings, I reckon, Miss? Wal, I like that. I like pride. Th' ole woman said always, so did uncle Zack, 'Nim, yar above yar means; yar only fit for a Britisher gentleman;' they did, I guess!"

"The sun is getting so hot," quoth Miss Wynn, laying down her hoe.

"I reckon I ain't agoin' to have come down from Davidson's to here to speak to you, Miss," and Nim vaulted over the fence, "an' let you slip through my fingers that way. Uncle Zack said he'd speak to the ole feller up at the bee, an' bade me make tracks an' speak to you, Miss. He's agoin' to foreclose the mortgage, he is."

"What, on Daisy Burn?" Linda was immensely relieved for the moment.

"Taint on nothen' else, I guess. 'Tis an elegant farm—ain't it?'

"Cannot your father wait for his money—even a little time? Captain Armytage would surely pay in the long run; or his son would——"

"But s'pose we don't want 'em to pay? S'pose we wants the farm, and house, and fixins, and all, for a new-married pair to set up, Miss?"

"I dont think you should allow anything to interfere with what is just and merciful," said Miss Wynn, with a strong effort. Her tormentor stood on the path between her and the house.

"S'pose I said they wanted that new-married pair to be you an' me, Miss?"

The audacity of the speech nearly took away her breath, and sent the blood in violent crimson over her face and throat. "Let me pass, sir," was her only answer, most haughtily spoken.

"Uncle Zack's a rich man," pleaded his son. "He's always been an ole 'coon, with a fine nest of cash at his back. It's in a New York bank, vested in shares. He's promised me the best part of it, an' the store into the bargain. You'll be a fool if you say 'No,' I guess."

Here he was seized from behind by the throat, and hurled round heavily to the ground.

"Why, then, you spalpeen of an owdacious vagabone, it's well but I smash every bone in yer skin. Of all the impudence I ever heerd in my whole life, you bate it out, clear and clane! Oh, murther, if I could only give you the batin' I'd like, only may be the master 'ud be vexed!" And Mr. Callaghan danced round his victim, wielding a terrible shillelagh

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MILL-PRIVILEGE.

Meanwhile, the noonday dinner at Davidson's bee progressed merrily. The mighty maskelongé disappeared piecemeal, simultaneously with a profusion of veal and venison pies, legs and sides of pork, raspberry tarts, huge dishes of potatoes and hot buns, trays of strawberries, and other legitimate backwoods fare: served and eaten all at the same time, with an aboriginal disregard of courses. After much wriggling and scheming—for he could not do the smallest thing in a straightforward manner—Zack Bunting had edged himself beside Mr. Wynn the elder; who, to please his good friend Davidson, occupied what he magnificently termed the vice-chair, being a stout high stool of rough red pine; and Zack slouched beside him, his small cunning eyes glancing sidelong occasionally from his tin platter, to the noble upright figure of the old gentleman.

"What's in the wind now?" quoth Robert to himself, at the other end of the board, as he surveyed this contrast of personages. Looking down the lines of hungry labourers for Nim's duplicate face, it was absent, though he had seen it a-field. Andy's was also wanting, and with it the hilarity which radiated from him upon surrounding company. Not having the key of the position Robert failed to connect these absences, although just then they were being connected in a very marked manner at Cedar Creek.

Zack wanted to speak on a particular subject to his lofty neighbour, but somehow it stuck in his throat. His usual audacity was at fault. Mr. Wynn had never seemed so inaccessible, though in reality he was making an effort to be unusually bland to a person he disliked. For the first time in his existence, cringing Zack feared the face of mortal man.

"Spell o' warm weather, squire, ain't it, raythe? I wor jest a sayin' to Silas Duff here, that I never want to see no better day for loggin', I don't."

"It is indeed beautifully fine," answered Mr. Wynn, who was generally called in the neighbourhood "the squire," a sort of compliment to his patriarchal and magisterial position. "I hope our friend Davidson will have his work cleared off satisfactorily before dark."

"Oh, no fear, squire, no fear, I guess. There's good teams a-field. Them cattle, druv by my lad Nim, are the finest in the township, I reckon."

"Indeed!" quoth Mr. Wynn, who just knew an ox from an ass.

"'Tain't a losin' game to keep a store in the bush, ef you be a smart man," observed Zack, with a leer, after a few minutes' devotion to the contents of his tin plate. By this adjective "smart" is to be understood "sharp, overreaching"—in fact, a cleverness verging upon safe dishonesty. "I guess it's the high road to bein' worth some punkins, ef a feller has sense to invest his money well."

"I daresay," rejoined Mr. Wynn, vaguely, looking down on the mean crooked face.

"Fact, squire, downright fact. Now, I don't mind tellin' *you*, squire," lowering his voice to a whisper, "that I've cleared a hundred per cent. on some sales in my time; an' the money hain't been idle since, you may b'lieve. Thar! that's sharp tradin', I guess?"

"Yes, sir, very sharp indeed." Mr. Wynn's face by no means reflected the Yankee's smile. But Zack saw in his gravity only a closer attention to the important subject of gain.

"I've shares in a big bank in New York, that returns me fifteen per cent.—every copper of it: an' I've two of the best farms in the township—that's countin' Daisy Burn, whar I'll foreclose some day soon, I guess."

"You are a prosperous man, as you calculate prosperity, Mr. Bunting."

"I guess I ain't nothin' else," answered the storekeeper, with satisfaction. "But I kin tell you, squire, that my lad Nim is 'tarnal 'cute too, an' he'll be worth lookin' arter as a husband, he will."

Still with an unsuspicious effort at cordiality, Mr. Wynn answered, "I suppose so."

"He might get gals in plenty, but he has a genteel taste, has Nim: the gal to please Nim must be thorough genteel. Now, what would you say, squire"—an unaccountable faint-heartedness seized uncle Zack at this juncture, and he coughed a hesitation.

"Well, sir!" For the old gentleman began to suspect towards what he was drifting, but rejected the suspicion as too wild and improbable.

"Wal, the fact is, squire, Nim will have the two farms, an' the store, an' the bank shares—of course not all that till I die, but Daisy Burn at once: an'—an'—he's in a 'tarnal everlastin' state about your daughter Linda, the purtiest gal in the township, I guess."

Mr. Wynn rose from his seat, his usually pale countenance deeply flushed. What! his moss-rose Linda—as often in a fond moment he named her—his pretty Linda, thought of in connection with this vulgar, cheating storekeeper's vulgar son? "Sir, how dare you?" were all the words his lips framed, when Robert, beholding the scene from the other end of the board, came to the rescue.

"The fellow has been drinking," was the most charitable construction Mr. Wynn could put upon Zack's astounding proposition. His dignity was cruelly outraged. "Baiting the trap with his hateful knavish gains!" cried Linda's father. "This is the result of the democracy of bush-life; the indiscriminate association with all classes of people that's forced on one. Any low fellow that pleases may ask your daughter in marriage!"

Robert walked up and down with him outside the building. Though sufficiently indignant himself, he tried to calm his father. "Don't make the affair more public by immediate withdrawal," he advised. "Stay an hour or so longer at the bee, for appearance' sake. It's hardly likely the fellow will attempt to address you again, at least on that subject." So the old gentleman very impatiently watched the log heaps piling, and the teams straining, and the "grog-bos" going his rounds, for a while longer.

We left Andy Callaghan over his victim, with a flourishing shillelagh. Having spun him round, he stirred him up again with a few sharp taps; and it must be confessed that Nim showed very little fight for a man of his magnitude, but sneaked over the fence after a minute's bravado.

"Och, but it's myself that 'ud like to be batin' ye!" groaned Andy for the second time, most sincerely. "Only I'm afeard if I began I wouldn't know how to lave off, 'twould be so pleasant, ye owdacious villain. Ha! ye'd throw the stick at me, would ye?" and Mr. Callaghan was across the fence in a twinkling. Whereupon Nim fairly turned tail, and fled ignominiously, after having ineffectually discharged a piece of timber, javelin-wise, at his enemy.

A loud peal of laughter, in a very masculine key, broke upon Andy's ear. It proceeded from the usually undemonstrative maiden Liberia, who was bringing a pail of water from the creek when her path was crossed by the flying pair. From that hour the tides of her feminine heart set in favour of the conqueror.

"Troth, an' I may as well let ye have the benefit of yer heels, ye mortal spalpeen," said Andy, reining himself in. "An' it's the father of a good thrashin' I could give ye for yer impidence. To think o' Miss Linda, that's one of the ould auncient Wynns of Dunore since Adam was a boy! I donno why I didn't pound him into smithereens whin I had him so 'andy on the flat of his back—only for Miss Linda, the darlin' crathur, tellin' me not. Sure there isn't a peeler in the whole counthry, nor a jail neither, for a thousand mile. Now I wondher, av it was a thing I did bate him black an' blue, whose business would it be to 'rest me; an' is it before the masther I'd be brought to coort?"

Cogitating thus, and chewing the cud on the end of his sapling, Andy returned homewards leisurely. His young mistress was nowhere to be seen; so he picked up the hoe and finished her strawberry bed; and when he saw the elder Mr. Wynn approaching, he quietly walked off to Davidson's and took his place among the hive again, as if nothing had happened. Nor did the faithful fellow ever allude to the episode—with a rare delicacy judging that the young lady would prefer silence—except once that Robert asked him what had brought him to Cedar Creek so opportunely.

"Why, thin, didn't I know what the vagabone wanted, lavin' the bee 'athout his dinner, an' goin' down this road, afther me lookin' at him this twel'month back dressing himself out in all the colours of neckties that ever was in the rainbow, an' saunterin' about the place every Sunday in particler, an' starin' at her purty face as impident as if he was her aqual. Often I'd ha' given me best shute o' clothes to pluck the two tails off his coat; an' he struttin' up to Daisy Burn, when she and Miss Armytage tached the little childher there; an' Miss Linda thinkin' no more of him than if a snake was watchin' her out ov the bushes. But, moreover, I heerd him an' his old schamer ov a father whisperin' at the bee: 'Do you go down to herself,' said Zack, 'an' I'll spake to the squire.' 'Sure, me lad,' thinks I, 'if you do you'll have company along wid you;' so I dogged him every step of the way."

Which explains Andy's interposition.

Robert Wynn, when his wrath at the Buntings' presumption subsided, had gloomy anticipations that this would prove the beginning of an irreconcilable feud, making the neighbourhood very disagreeable. But not so. A week afterwards, while he stood watching the workmen building the dam for the projected mill, he heard the well-known drawl at his elbow, and turning, beheld the unabashed Zack. He had duly weighed matters for and against, and found that the squire was too powerful for a pleasant quarrel, and too big to injure with impunity.

"Wal, Robert, so yar raisin' a sawmill!" he had uttered in a tone of no agreeable surprise. Mr. Wynn pointed to Davidson, and left *him* to settle that point of rivalry.

"We wull divide the custom o' the country, neebor Zack," quoth the other.

"I don't deny that you have an elegant mill-privilege here; but I guess that's all you'll have. Whar's grist to come from, or lumber? D'ye think they'll pass the four roads at the 'Corner, whar my mill stands handy?"

"Room eneugh i' the warld for baith o' us," nodded Davidson; "a' room eneugh in Canada for a million ither mills, freend." And he walked down the sloping bank to assist at the dam.

This last—a blow at the pocket—seemed to affect Zack far more than that other blow at the intangible essence, his family honour. He could see his son Nim set off for the back settlements of Iowa, without a pang; for it is in vulgar Yankee nature to fling abroad the sons and daughters of a house far and wide into the waters of the world, to make their own way, to sink or swim as happens. But the new sawmill came between him and his rest. Before winter the machinery had been noisily at work for many a day; with huge beams walking up to the saw, and getting perpetually sliced into clean fresh boards; with an intermittent shooting of slabs and sawdust into the creek. "Most eloquent music" did it discourse to Robert's ears, whose dream of a settlement was thus fulfilling, in that the essential requisite, lumber for dwelling houses was being prepared.

CHAPTER XLII.

UNDER THE NORTHERN LIGHTS.

For some sufficient reason, the Yankee storekeeper did not at that time prosecute his avowed intention of foreclosing the mortgage on Daisy Burn. Perhaps there was something to be gained by dallying with the Captain still—some further value to be sucked out of him in that villanous trap, the tavern bar, whither many a disappointed settler has resorted to drown his cares, and found the intoxicating glass indeed full of "blue ruin."

One brilliant day in midwinter, when the sky was like a crystallized sapphire dome, and the earth spotless in snow, a single sleigh came bowling along the smooth road towards the "Corner." "A heavy fall of snow is equivalent to the simultaneous construction of macadamized roads all through Canada," saith that universally quoted personage, Good Authority. So it is found by thousands of sleighs, then liberated after a rusty summer rest. Then is the season for good fellowship and friendly intercourse: leisure has usurped the place of business, and the sternest utilitarian finds time for relaxation.

The idlers in Bunting's bar heard the sleigh-bells long before they left the arches of the forest; and as the smallest atom of gravel strikes commotion into a still pool, so the lightest event was of consequence in this small stagnant community of the "Corner." The idlers speculated concerning those bells, and a dozen pair of eyes witnessed the emergence of the vehicle into the little stumpy street.

Zack's sharp vision knew it for one that had been here last year, as he peered through the store-window, stuffed with goods of all sorts; but the occupant was not the same. Grizzled hair and beard escaped the bounds of the fur cap tied down over his ears, and the face was much older and harder. The mills seemed to attract his attention, frozen up tightly as they were; he slackened his sleigh to a pause, threw his reins on the horse's neck, and walked to the edge of the dam. After a few minutes, Bunting's curiosity stimulated him to follow, and see what attracted the stranger's regard.

"Are you the proprietor of this mill, sir?" called out the tall gray-haired gentleman, in no mild tone. Zack hesitated, weighing the relative advantages of truth and falsehood. "Wal, I guess——"

"You need guess nothing, sir; but the construction of your dam is a disgrace to civilization—a murderous construction, sir. Do you see that it is at least twelve feet, perpendicular, sir? and how do you ever expect that salmon can climb over that barrier? I suppose a specimen of the true 'salmo salar' has never been caught in these waters since you blocked up the passage with your villanous dam, sir?"

"I warn't ever a-thinkin' o' the salmon at all, I guess," answered the mill-owner truly and humbly, because he conceived himself in the authoritative presence of some bigwig, senator, or M.P., capable of calling him Zack Bunting, to a disagreeable account, perchance.

"But you should have thought," rejoined the stranger, irately. "Through such wrong-headedness as yours, Canada is losing yearly one of her richest possessions in the way of food. What has exterminated the salmon in nearly all rivers west of Quebec? dams like this, which a fish could no more ascend than he could walk on dry land. But I hope to see parliamentary enactments which shall render this a felony, sir—a felony if I can. It is robbery and murder both together, sir."

Mr. Hiram Holt walked rapidly to his sleigh, wrapped himself again in the copious furs, and left the storekeeper staring after the swift gliding cutter, and wondering more than ever who he was.

This matter of the dams had so much occupied his attention of late, that even after he reached Cedar Creek he reverted to it once and anon; for this fine old Canadian had iron opinions welded into his iron character. The capacity of entertaining a conviction, yet being lukewarm about it, was not possible to Hiram Holt. He believed, and practised suitably, with thorough intensity, in everything; even in such a remote subject as the Canadian fisheries.

The squire, who knew what preservation of salmon meant in the rivers of Britain, and who in his time had been a skilful angler, could sympathize with him about the reckless system of extinction going on through the province, and which, if it be not arrested by the hand of legislative interference, will probably empty the Canadian streams of this most delicious and nutritive of fish.

"A gold-field discovered in Labrador would not be more remunerative than that single item of salmon, if properly worked," remarked Hiram. "When the fisheries of the tiny Tweed rent for fifteen thousand a-year, a hundred times that sum would not cover the value of the tributaries of the St. Lawrence. And yet they're systematically killed out, sir, by these abominable dams."

"Why, Mr. Holt," said Linda, looking up from her work, "I think the mills are of more consequence than the salmon."

"But they're not incompatible, my young lady," he answered. "Put steps to the dams—wooden boxes, each five feet high, for the salmon to get upstairs into the still water a-top." Whereat Miss Linda, in her ignorance, was mightily amused at the idea of a fish ascending a staircase.

"The quantity of salmon was almost infinite twenty years ago," said Hiram, after condescending to enlighten her on the subject of its leaping powers. "I remember reading that Ross purchased a ton weight of it from the Esquimaux for a sixpenny knife; and one haul of his own seine net took thirty-three hundred salmon."

George, manufacturing a sled in the corner, whistled softly, and expressed his incredulity in a low tone; not so low, but that Mr. Holt's quick ears caught the doubt, and he became so overflowing with piscatory anecdotes, that Linda declared afterwards the very tea had tasted strongly of salmon on that particular evening.

"It is only a few years since Sir John Macdonald and his party killed four hundred salmon in one week, from a part of l'Esquemain River, called the Lower Pools. Thirty-five such rivers, equally full, flow through Labrador into the St. Lawrence: am I not then right in saying that this source of wealth is prodigious?" asked Mr. Holt. "But the abominable dams, and the barrier nets, and the Indians' spearing, have already lessened it one-fourth." A relative comparing of experiences, with reference to fishy subjects, ensued between the squire and his guest; and both agreed that—quitting the major matter of the dams—an enforcement of "close time," from the 20th of August till May, would materially tend to preserve the fish

"Nature keeps them tolerably close most of that time," remarked Arthur, "by building a couple of yards of ice over them. From November till April they're under lock and key."

"And han't you ever fished through holes in the ice?" asked Mr. Holt. "Capital sport, I can tell you, with a worm for bait."

"No: but I was going to say, how curiously thin and weak the trout are just when the ice melts. They've been on prison allowance, I presume, and are ready to devour anything."

During all the evening, though Linda took openly a considerable share in the conversation, her mind would beat back on one question, suggested repeatedly: "Why did Mr. Sam Holt go to Europe?" for one item of news brought by to-day's arrival was, that his eldest son had suddenly been seized with a wish to visit England, and had gone in the last boat from Halifax.

Glancing up at some remark, she encountered Mrs. Wynn's eyes, and coloured deeply. That sweetest supervision of earth, a mother's loving look, had read more deeply than the daughter imagined. Rising hurriedly, on some slight excuse, she went to the window and looked out.

"Oh, papa! such glorious northern lights!"

Ay, surely. Low arcs of dazzling light stretched from east to west, across the whole breadth of the heavens; whence coruscated, in prolonged flashes, gorgeous streamers of every colour, chiefly of pale emerald green, pink, and amber.

"A rich aurora for this season of the year," remarked Hiram Holt. "Those that are brightly coloured generally appear in autumn or spring."

"Oh, yes," said George; "do you recollect how magnificent was one we had while the fall-wheat was planting? the sky was all crimson, with yellow streamers."

"Do you know what the Indians think about auroras?" asked Mr. Holt. "They believe that these flashes are the spirits of the dead dancing before the throne of the Manitou, or Great Spirit."

"No wonder they should seek for some supernatural cause of such splendour," observed Robert.

The aurora borealis exhibited another phase of its wondrous beauty on the ensuing evening. The young people from Cedar Creek had gone to a corn-husking bee at Vernon's, an old gentleman settler, who lived some eight miles off on the concession-line; and coming home in the sleighs, the whole magnificent panorama of the skies spread above them. Waves of light rolled slowly from shore to shore of the horizon in vast pulsations, noiselessly ascending to the zenith, and descending all across the stars, like tidal surges of the aërial ocean sweeping over a shallow silver strand.

Three sleighs, a short distance from each other, were running along the canal-like road, through dark walls of forest, towards the "Corner." Now, it is a principle in all bringings home from these midwinter bees, that families scatter as much as may be, and no sisters shall be escorted by their own brothers, but by somebody else's brothers. Consequently, Robert Wynn had paired off with Miss Armytage for this drive; and Mr. Holt, graybeard though he was, would not resign Linda to any one, but left young Armytage Arthur, and Jay to fill the third sleigh.

Of course that sublime aurora overhead formed a main topic of conversation; but irrelevant matter worked in somehow. Blunt Hiram at last furnished a key to what had puzzled his fair companion, by asking abruptly, when Captain Argent was expected at Cedar Creek?

"Captain Argent?" she repeated, in surprise; "he's not expected at all; I believe he has gone to Ireland on a year's leave."

"Then you are not about to be married to him?" said Mr. Holt, still more blumtly.

"No indeed, sir," she answered, feeling very red, and thankful for the comparative gloom. Whereupon Mr. Holt shook hands with her, and expressed his conviction that she was the best and prettiest girl in the county; afterwards fell into a brown study, lasting till they got home.

The pair in the hindmost sleigh diverged equally far from the aurora; for heavy upon Edith's heart lay the fact that the mortgage was at last about to be foreclosed, and they should leave Daisy Burn. This very evening, her father coming late to Mrs. Vernon's corn-shelling bee, had told her that Zack would be propitiated no longer; he wanted to get the farm in time for spring operations, and vowed he would have it. They must all go to Montreal, where Captain Armytage had some friends, and where Edith hoped she might be able, perhaps, to turn her accomplishments to good account by opening a school.

"Papa is not at all suited for a settler's life," she said. "He has always lived in cities, and town habits are strong upon him. It is the best we can do."

CHAPTER XLIII.

A BUSH-FLITTING.

INTO Robert Wynn's mind, during that sleigh-drive under the northern lights, had entered one or two novel ideas. The first was a plan for frustrating the grasping storekeeper's design. He laid the whole circumstances before Mr. Holt, and asked for the means of redeeming the mortgage, by paying Captain Armytage's debt to Bunting, which was not half the value of the farm.

The gallant officer was not obliged for his friend's officiousness. He had brought himself to anticipate the move to Montreal most pleasurably, notwithstanding the great pecuniary loss to himself. The element of practicality had little place in his mental composition. An atmosphere of vagueness surrounded all his schemes, and coloured them with a seductive halo.

"You see, my dear fellow," he said to Robert, when the propo·

sition of redeeming the mortgage was made, "you see, it does not suit my plans to bury myself any longer in these backwoods, eh? There are so few opportunities of relaxation—of intellectual converse, of—a—in short, of any of those refinements required by a man of education and knowledge of the world. You will understand this, my dear Mr. Robert. I—I wish for a more extended field, in fact. Nor is it common justice to the girls to keep them immured, I may say, in an atmosphere of perpetual labour. I am sure my poor dear Edith has lived a slave's life since she came to the bush. Only for your amiable family, I—I positively don't know what might have been the consequence, eh?"

Robert felt himself getting angry, and wisely withdrew. On Mr. Holt's learning the reception of his offer, he briefly remarked that he guessed Sam wouldn't object to own a farm near Cedar Creek, and he should buy it altogether from the Captain; which was accordingly done. We refrain from picturing Zack's feelings.

The other idea which had visited Robert under the aurora—why should he not himself become the tenant of Daisy Burn? He took his fur cap and went down there for an answer.

The Captain had gone to the "Corner," this being post-day, and he expected some letters from the Montreal friends in whom he believed. Reginald was chopping wood; the two sisters were over their daily lessons. What to do with Jay, while the above question was being asked and answered, was a problem tasking Robert's ingenuity; and finally, he assumed the office of writing master, set her a sum in long division, which he assured her would require the deepest abstraction of thought, and advised a withdrawal to some other room for that purpose.

Jay fell into the snare, and went, boasting of her arithmetical powers, which would bring back the sum completed in a few minutes. The instant the door closed—

"I came down this morning," said Robert, "to tell you that I have concluded to take Daisy Burn as tenant to Mr. Holt, from the first of April next. That is," he added, "on one condition."

"What?" she asked, a faint colour rising to her cheek, for his eyes were fixed on her.

"Arthur is much steadier than he was, since that visit to Argent last spring made him see that a penniless proud man has no business to endeavour to live among his equals in social rank, but his superiors in wealth. He is good enough farmer to manage Cedar Creek, with George's increasing help, and Dubois as a sort of steward. Edith, if I come here and settle on this farm, I cannot live alone: will you be my wife?"

He leaned forward, and took her passive hand. The conscious crimson rose for one moment to her throat and averted face, crept even to the finger-tips, then left her of the usual marble paleness again.

"No, Robert," she answered firmly, withdrawing her hand; "it cannot be; I cannot leave my father and Jay."

To this determination she held fast. For she had known that such an option might be offered her, as every woman in like circumstances must know; she had weighed the matter well in the balance of duty, and this was her resolve. Could she have counted the cost accurately, it might not have been; but she hid from her eyes the bright side of the possible future, and tried steadily to do what she deemed right.

Great was Jay's surprise, when she came back with the long-division sum triumphantly proved, to find her writing master gone, and Edith with her eyes very tearful. That occurrence was a puzzle to her for some time afterwards. Crying was so rare with Edith—and what could Robert Wynn have to do with it? But Jay prudently asked no questions after the first astonished ejaculation.

When Robert was walking back to the Creek, feeling his pleasant "castle in the air" shattered about his ears, blind to the splendour of the sun-lit winter world, and deaf to the merry twit of the snow-birds, young Armytage came out of the woods and joined him. He, poor fellow, was preoccupied with his own plans.

"I think, and Edith agrees with me, that my best chance is to get a small lot of wild land, and begin at the beginning as you did. I want the discipline of all the enforced hard work, Bob. My unfortunate bringing up in every species of self-indulgence was no good education for a settler; but, with God's help, I'll get over it."

Robert was lifted out of his own trouble for a time, by seeing the manful struggle which this other heart had to make against the slavery of habit. He roused himself to speak cheeringly to the young man, and receive his confidence cordially, in an hour when selfishness would rather have been alone.

"Perhaps an application for a Governmental free grant of land would be advisable," said Reginald. "I've been thinking of it. You see I would rather like to be bound down, and forced to stay in one spot, as I must if I undertake the hundred acres on Government terms."

"What are the terms?" asked Robert.

"Well, in the first place, I must be more than eighteen years old; must take possession of the land in a month from the date of allotment; must put twelve acres at least into cultivation within four years, besides building a log-house, twenty feet by eighteen; and must guarantee residence on the lot till these conditions be fulfilled."

"Hard work, and no mistake," said Robert. "I've a mind to go with you."

"*You!*" exclaimed the other, with unfeigned surprise, looking in Wynn's face.

"Yes; I feel as if I would be the better for a few months of the old difficulties. I'd like to get away from this for a while."

"But perhaps you wouldn't like the 'while' to extend over four years," remarked Armytage. "Of all people, I never expected to find you a rover, Wynn."

It was the passing fancy of a wounded spirit. Before the Captain departed from Daisy Burn, Robert had become wiser. Duty called on him to remain in the home which his labour had created in the bush. After some deliberation, he asked Reginald to work Mr. Holt's newly acquired farm in shares with himself; and Reginald, though looking wistfully on his receding vision of solitary bush life, consented.

"Farming upon shares" signifies that the owner furnishes the land, implements of husbandry, and seed; the other contracting party finds all the labour required; and the produce is divided between them. This agreement was slightly modified in the case of Daisy Burn, for Robert did many a hard day's work on it himself, and was general superintendent. The plan may answer well where ignorance and capital go together, and chance to secure the services of honest industry; but the temptations of the labourer to fraud are strong, and his opportunities unlimited. Many a new settler has been ruined by farming upon shares with dishonest people.

The last sleighing week saw the departure of the Armytage family. Before a thaw imprisoned the back settlements in spring isolation, they had reached the city of Ottawa, where the Captain showed a disposition to halt for some days to look about him, he said—a favourite occupation in his lotos-eating life: Edith protested in vain. No; he might fall in with some employment to suit him perchance: though what would suit Captain Armytage, except a handsome salary for keeping his hands in his pockets, he would himself have been puzzled to define.

However, for the purpose of falling in with such employment, he frequented most of the hotel and tavern-bars in the town, leaving the girls chiefly to their own devices. So, as the weather was fine, Miss Armytage and Jay walked about a great deal beside the broad brown river, just unchained from ice, and rushing, floe-laden, towards the Chaudière Falls; through the wide rectangular streets, lined with the splendid stores and massive houses of a busy population; through the village-like suburbs, where each cottage was fronted with a garden; and ascended the Major Hill, to behold the unrivalled view of forest, flood, and field from its summit. Far to right and left stretched a panorama, such as only British North America could furnish; the great Ottawa river gliding by, a hundred and fifty feet below, the long line of cataracts flashing and dashing to the north, a framework of black forest closing in to the edge of the streets, and bounded itself on the horizon by high blue mountains.

Here they were overtaken by Mr. Hiram Holt. He had seen them pass as he sat in some lawyer's office near by, and followed them when his business was finished. His first proposition was that they should go with him to Mapleton, while their father chose to idle about Bytown. Miss Armytage declined, for she hoped they might leave for Montreal in a day or two at furthest; but if Mr. Holt commanded any influence there,——and she told him, poor girl, the little plan of teaching which she had formed.

" Come, now," quoth Hiram, after some conversation on that head, and a promise of writing to friends in Montreal, "take my arm, young lady, and I'll show you some of our Ottawa lions. Biggest of all, to my fancy, is the town itself—only twenty-five years old, and as large as if it had been growing for centuries. The man is only in the prime of life who felled the first tree on this site, and now the town covers as much ground as Boston. Certainly the site is unrivalled."

Edith, thinking a good deal of other more personally important things, acquiesced in all he said.

"You see, it's the centre of everything: three magnificent rivers flow together here, the Ottawa, Rideau, and Gatineau; water-privilege is unlimited; Chaudière up yonder would turn all the mills in creation. Now, do you know the reason it's called Chaudière, my dear?"

This to Jay, who had to confess her ignorance.

"Because the vapour—do you see the cloud always ascending from the crest of the Falls?—reminded somebody of the steam from a boiling kettle. Hence these are the Kettle Falls, Miss Jay."

She thought the appellation very undignified.

"The finest building sites are on this Barracks Hill," observed Mr. Holt, relapsing into contemplation. "But Government won't give them up: it is to be a sort of Acropolis, commanding the whole position at the fork of the three rivers, and the double mass of houses on both sides. Bytown hasn't seen its best days yet, by a long chalk, I guess."

"I thought it was called Ottawa," said Jay, inquiringly.

"Well, madam, in this country, when cities arrive at the dignity of ten thousand inhabitants, they are permitted to change their names. So a town named York has very properly become Toronto, and the town founded by Colonel By has become Ottawa. But, as I was saying, its best days are in the future: it must be the capital of the Canadas yet."

Jay remembered that her geography book assigned that distinction to Quebec and Montreal. Mr. Holt affirmed that the pre-eminence of these must dwindle before this young city at their feet, which could be captured by no *coup-de-main* in case of war, and was at the head of the natural land avenue to the great Lakes Huron and Superior.

"The ancient Indian route," said he—"the only safe one if there were war with the United States; and you may depend on it, if railways take in the country, one of the greatest termini will be here, at the head-quarters of the lumber trade."

His vaticination has been fulfilled. Lines of telegraph, rail, and steamers radiate from Ottawa city as a centre, at this day. It has successfully contended for the honour of being acknowledged capital of the Canadas, and has been declared such by the decision of Queen Victoria.

Lions in the way of antiquity it had none to show, being the veriest mushroom of a capital; but Mr. Holt took his friends to see the great sluice-works, the beautiful Suspension Bridge, the chain of locks forming a water staircase on the Rideau canal, and one of the huge sawmills turned by a rill from Chaudière Falls, where Jay admired immensely the glittering machinery of saws, chisels, and planes, and the gay painting of the iron-work. Since then, the vast tubular bridge of the Grand Trunk Railway spans the river, and is a larger lion than all the rest.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SHOVING OF THE ICE.

We must pass over a year; for so long did Sam Holt continue in Europe. Rambling over many countries, from the heather hills of Scotland and the deep fiords of Norway, to the Alhambra and the sunlit "isles of Greece," this grandson of a Suffolk peasant, elevated to the ranks of independence and intellectual culture by the wisdom and self-denial of his immediate ancestors, saw, and sketched, and intensely enjoyed, the beauty with which God has clothed the old world. And in that same sketchbook, his constant companion, there was one page which opened oftener than any other —fell open of itself, if you held the volume carelessly—containing a drawing, not of alpine aiguille, nor Italian valley, nor Spanish posada, nor Greek temple, but of a comfortable old mansion, no way romantically situate among swelling hills, and partially swathed in ivy. The corner of the sketch bore the lightly pencilled letters, "Dunore."

And now he fancied that twelve months' travel had completed the cure, and that he had quite conquered his affection for one who did not return it. He was prepared to settle down in common life again, with the second scar on his heart just healed.

Coming home by Boston, he took rail thence to Burlington on Lake Champlain, and near the head of that noble sheet of water crossed the Canadian frontier into French scenery and manners. The line stopped short at the edge of the St. Lawrence, where passengers take boat for La Chine or the island of Montreal; that is, ice permitting. Now, on this occasion the ice did not permit, at least for some time. Sam Holt had hoped that its annual commotion would have been over; but it had only just begun.

A vast sheet of ice, a mile in breadth and perhaps ten in length, was being torn from its holdfasts by the current beneath; was creaking, grinding, shoving along, crunching up against the shore in masses, block over block ten or fifteen feet high; yielding slowly and reluctantly to the pressure of the deep tide below, which sometimes with a tremendous noise forced the hummocks into long ridges. The French Canadians call these "bourdigneaux."

The sights, the sounds, were little short of sublime. But when night came down with its added stillness, then the heaving, grating, tearing, wrenching noises were as of some prodigious hidden strength, riving the very foundations of solid earth itself. People along shore could hardly sleep. Mr. Holt, having a taste for strange scenery, spent much of that sharp spring night under "the glimpses of the moon," watching the struggle between the long-enchained water and its icy tyrant. Another passenger, like-minded, was companion of his ramble.

"I fear it is but an utopian scheme to dream of bridging such a flood as this," observed Holt. "No piers of man's construction could withstand the force that is in motion on the river to-night. I fear the promoters of the Victoria Bridge are too sanguine."

"Well, I could pin my faith upon any engineering project sanctioned by Stephenson," rejoined the other. "We had him here to view the site, just a mile out of Montreal: he recommended the tubular plan, a modified copy of the English Britannia Bridge. And Ross, the resident engineer, has already begun preliminaries, with coffer dams and such like mysteries."

"It will be the eighth wonder of the world, if completed," said Mr. Holt, "and must add immensely to the commercial advantages of Canada."

"My dear sir," quoth the other impressively (he was a corn-merchant in Montreal), "unless you are in trade, you cannot duly estimate the vast benefits that bridging the St. Lawrence will confer on the colony. For six months of the year the river is closed to navigation, as you are aware, and the industry of Canada is consequently imprisoned. But this noble highway which the Grand Trunk Railway Company have commenced, will render all seasons alike to our commerce. Consider the advantage of being able to transport the inexhaustible cereals of the Far West, 'without break of bulk or gauge,' from the great corn countries of the Upper Lakes to the very wharves on the Atlantic."

Mr. Holt was not surprised to hear, after this, that the speaker was a heavy shareholder in the Grand Trunk Railway, and placed unlimited faith in its projects. Whether, in subsequent years, its complete collapse (for a time) as a speculation lowered his enthusiasm, we cannot say: perhaps he was satisfied to suffer, in fulfilment of the superb ambition of opening up a continent to commerce.

The corn merchant had got upon his hobby, and could have talked all night about the rail and its prospects in Canada. "The progress of the province outstrips all sober calculation," said he. "Population has increased twelve hundred per cent. within the last forty years; wherever the rail touches the ground, an agricultural peasantry springs up. Push it through the very wilderness, say I: there is no surer means of filling our waste places with industrial life; and the Pacific should be our terminus."

This design has ceased to be thought extravagant, since Professor Hind's explorations have proved the existence of a fertile belt across the continent, through British territory, from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains; along which, if speedily and wisely opened up, must travel the commerce of China and Japan, as well as the gold of Columbia. The nation which constructs this line will, by its means, hold the sceptre of the commercial world. Brother Jonathan is well aware of the fact, and would long since have run a chain of locomotives from Atlantic to Pacific, if he could; but thousands of miles of the great American desert intervene, and along the western sea-board there is no port fit for the vast trade, from Acapulco to Esquimalt on Vancouver's Island, except San Francisco, which, for other reasons, is incapacitated.

Grinding, crushing, heaving, the broad current of the St. Lawrence bore its great burden all night along. The same might continue for many days; and Sam Holt was anxious to get home: he determined, in company with his new friend the corn merchant, to attempt the passage in a canoe.

"Now, sir," said the latter gentleman, while they waited on the bank, muffled to their eyes in furs, "you will have some experience of what a complete barrier the frozen St. Lawrence is to Canadian commerce, or the commonest intercourse, and how much the Victoria Bridge is needed."

"Au large! au large!" called the boatmen, sturdy, muscular fellows accustomed to river perils; and, laying themselves at the bottom of the canoe as directed, shoulders resting against the thwarts, the passengers began their "traject." Sometimes they had open water in lanes and patches; sometimes a field of jagged ice, whereupon the merry-hearted voyageurs jumped out and dragged the canoe across to water again, singing some French song the while. What perilous collisions of floes they dexterously avoided! What intricate navigation of narrow channels they wound through within half-a-boat's length of crushing destruction! Notwithstanding all their ability, the passengers were thankful to touch land again some miles below the usual crossing place, and some hours after embarkation.

Here the banks were deeply excoriated with the pressure of the ice against them; for the edges of the vast field set in motion the previous day had ploughed into the earth, and piled itself in immense angular "jambs." On the quay of Montreal it lay in block heaps also, crushed up even into the public thoroughfare; and men were at work to help the break in the harbour with pick-axes and crowbars on the grey plain.

Mr. Holt had only a few minutes wherewith to visit a friend in one of the obscure streets of the city in a mean-looking house, made known to him by the coming out of children bearing school-satchels. A gentleman with semi-military air, wearing his hat somewhat jauntily on top of a bloated face and figure, met them as he emerged from a side-street, and, paternally patting their heads, called them "little dears;" and, from his seedy dress and unoccupied manner, it was not hard to perceive that he must still be unsuccessful in his search after the employment to suit him.

Whether Edith's suited her or not was a question her friend would fain have asked, when he saw the tired look and dull eye after her morning's work. Captain Armytage observed that he had frequently wished her to take holidays—in fact, had done everything short of exercising his paternal authority; which, perhaps, he ought to have used on the occasion. In fact, he had thoughts of removal to Toronto; the air of Montreal evidently did not agree with either of the girls, eh? It is to be noticed that Jay stood by, having suddenly shot into a slender shy girl, very efficient over the smallest pupils.

Mr. Holt was cordially pleased when Captain Armytage made many apologies for not remaining longer; the fact was, he had a business appointment; and herewith he whispered to his daughter who gave him something from her pocket—Mr. Holt fancied it was money.

She knew of the approaching marriage of his sister Bell, to attend which he had hastened home; and knew, also, that some of the Cedar Creek household would be there. Sinewy athlete as Sam Holt was, he could not frame his lips to ask whether Linda might be one of them. But how often had he to put the question resolutely away during that and the next day's travelling? And what would have been his disappointment if, on entering the family at Mapleton, that pretty brown head and fair face had not met his glance? And you fancied that you were cured, Mr. Holt; you reckoned fifteen months' travel a specific.

Yes; Linda was one of Bell's bridesmaids. And that same sketchbook, filled with glimpses of European scenery, brought about an enduring result on this wise.

The girls were looking over it the day before the wedding—Miss Bell in a manner rather preoccupied, which, under the circumstances, was excusable. Having both a trousseau and a bridegroom on one's hands is quite sufficient for any young lady's capacity; so she presently left her brother Sam to explain his sketchbook to Linda alone.

All went evenly until the page was opened, the bit of silver paper lifted off, and Dunore was before her. What a start—colour—exclamation! Her beloved Irish home, with its green low hills, and its purple sea-line afar. "Oh, Mr. Holt, I am so glad that you went to see Dunore!" Her eyes were full of tears as she gazed.

"Are you? I went there for your sake, Linda, to look at the place you loved so much." And—and—what precise words he used then, or how he understood that she would prize the drawing a thousand-fold for his sake, neither rightly remembered afterwards. But——

"In April the ice always breaks up," remarked old Hiram, with a huge laugh at his own joke.

* * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Holt, after their wedding trip to Niagara, settled down soberly at Daisy Burn as if they had been married a hundred years, Arthur said. They brought back with them a fugitive slave, who had made her escape from a Virginian planter. Dinah proved a faithful and useful nurse to the Daisy Burn children. Fugitive slaves are found all over Canada as servants, and generally prove trustworthy and valuable.

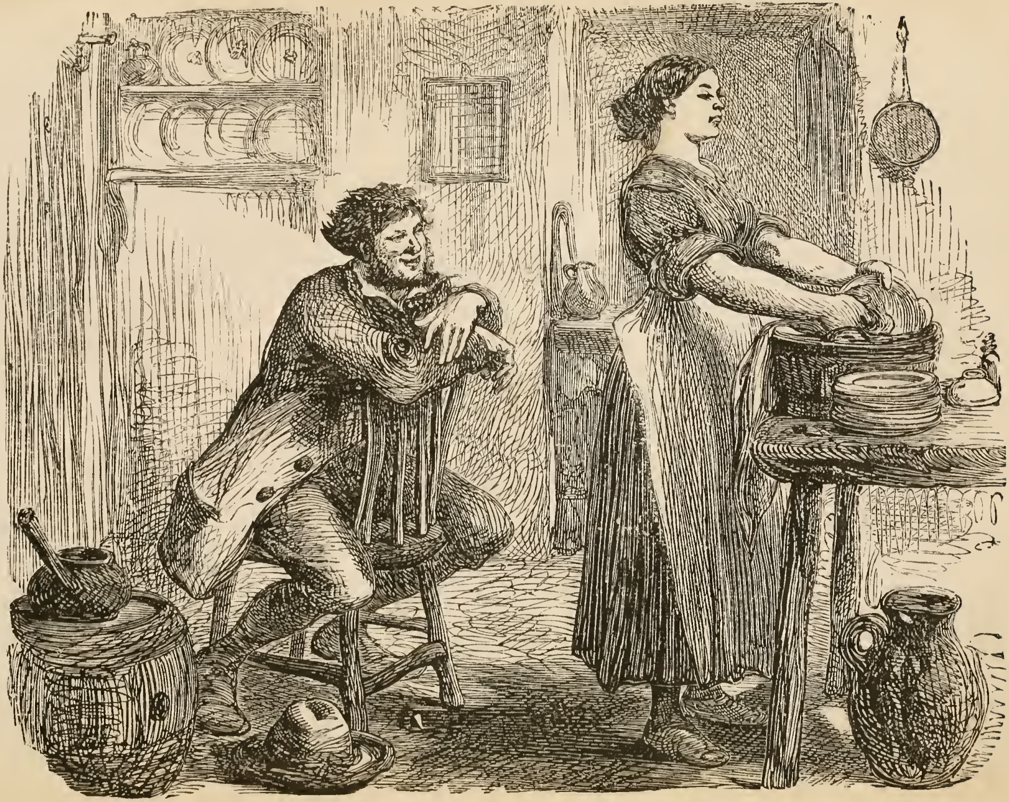
CHAPTER XLV.

EXEUNT OMNES.

Now, in the year 1857, came a retributive justice upon Zack Bunting, in the shape of a complete collapse of all his gains and their produce. He had placed them in a New York bank which paid enormous interest—thirty per cent., people said; and when that figure of returns is offered, wise men shake their heads at the security of the principal. Nevertheless, all went rightly till the commercial panic of the period above mentioned, when Zack's possessions were reduced to their primitive nonentity, and the old proverb abundantly illustrated, "Ill got, ill gone."

"Libby," quoth Andy, one afternoon, soon subsequently to the above occurrence, "they say that precious limb of an uncle of yours isn't goin' to come back here at all at all. I'm tould Mrs. Zack an' Ged is packing up, to be off to some wild place intirely."

He waited, gazing at her energetic movements in washing the dinner plates (for the luxury of ware had supplanted tin before now



" WON'T YOU BE VERY LONESOME IN THE WORLD ALL BY YOURSELF, LIBBY, ASTHORE?"

at Cedar Creek), to see what effect the news would produce. None. Miss Liberia merely uttered "Wal!"

"Won't you be very lonesome in the world all by yourself, Libby, asthore?" he rejoined, casting a melting tenderness into voice and manner; "without a relation that ever was?"

"Not a bit, I guess," was the curt reply.

"Och," groaned the lover, "av there ever was in the whole 'varsal world a woman so hard to manage! She hasn't no more feelin's than one of them chaneys, or she wouldn't be lookin' at me these four years a-pinin' away visibly before her eyes. My new shute o' clothes had to be took in twice, I'm got so thin; but little you cares." Then, after a pause, "Libby, mavourneen, you'd be a grand hand at managin' a little store; now the one at the 'Corner' 'll be shut. 'Spose we tried it togedder, eh, mabouchal?"

Without hesitation, without change of countenance, without displacing one of her plates, the Yankee damsel answered, "I guess 'twould be a spry thing, rayther; we'd keep house considerable well. And now that's settled, you can't be comin' arter me a tormentin' me no more; and the sooner we sot up the fixin's the better, I reckon."

Thus calmly and sensibly did the massive maiden Liberia prepare to glide from single into wedded life; and though she has never been able quite to restrain the humorous freaks of her husband, she has succeeded in transforming the pauper labourer Andy Callaghan into an independent shopkeeper and farmer.

Not long after the happy accomplishment of this last alliance the post-office was transferred from the decaying knot of cabins at the "Corner" to the rising settlement of Cedar Creek. Andy's new store had a letter box fixed in its window, and his wife added to her multifarious occupations that of post-mistress.

"Anything for me this evening, Mrs. Callaghan?" asked the silver-headed squire, in his stately way, coming up to the counter.

"I guess thar's the newspaper," answered Liberia, pushing it across, while the other hand held a yard measure upon some calico, whence she was serving a customer. A new face Mr. Wynn saw in a moment: probably one of the fresh emigrants who sometimes halted at the Creek proceeding up country.

Mrs. Callaghan looked doubtfully at the piece of English silver produced by the woman, and turned it round between her finger and thumb. "I say, squire, stop a minute: what sort o' money's this?"

"A crown-piece sterling; you'll give six shillings and a penny currency for it," answered Mr. Wynn.

"Now I guess that's what I don't understand," said Liberia. "Why ain't five shillin's the same everywhar?"

That Mr. Wynn could not answer. He had been indulging some thoughts of a pamphlet on currency reformation, and went out of the store revolving them again.

For it is to be noted that the squire felt somewhat like Lycurgus, or Codrus, or some of those old lawgivers and state-founders in this new settlement of the Creek. He knew himself for the greatest authority therein, the one whose word bore greatest weight, the referee and arbitrator in all cases. Plenty of interests had sprang up in his life such as he could not have dreamed of nine years before, when rooted at Dunore. His thoughts of the latter had changed since he learned that a railway had cut the lawn across and altered the avenue and entrance gate, and the new owner had constructed a piece of ornamental water where the trout-stream used to run; likewise built a wing to the mansion in the Tudor style, with a turret at the end. Which items of news, by completely changing the aspect of the dear old home, as they remembered Dunore, had done much towards curing the troublesome yearning after it.

Now the squire walked through the broad sloping street of pretty and clean detached cottages (white, with bright green shutters outside), fronting fields whence the forest had been pushed back considerably. Orchards of young trees bloomed about them; the sawmill was noisily eating its way through planks on the edge of the stream; groups of "sugar-bush" maples stood about; over all the declining sun, hastening to immerse itself in the measureless woods westward. "Pleasant places," said Mr. Wynn to himself, quoting old words; "my lot has fallen in pleasant places."

Sitting in the summer parlour of the butternut's shade, he read his newspaper—a weekly Greenock print, the advertisement side half-filled with quack medicines, after the manner of such journals in Canada. Presently an entry in the "Deaths" arrested his attention.

"Died, at his house in Montreal, on the 11th inst., Captain Reginald Armytage, late of H.M.'s 115th foot. Friends at a distance will please accept this intimation."

Robert sprang to his feet. "Let me see it, father."

Now was the twentieth day of the month. "I wonder she has not written to some of us—to Linda even," said he, returning the paper. Then going over beside his mother, he whispered, "I shall go to her, mother."

"Poor Edith! But what could you do, my son?"

"Mother"—after a pause—"shall I not bring you another daughter to fill Linda's empty place?"

Mrs. Wynn had long before this been trusted with the story of Robert's affection. Her gentleness won every secret of her son's heart.

What could she say now but bless him through her tears?

And so he went next day. He found the mean house in the obscure street where Edith had for years toiled, and not unhappily. Duty never brings unmixed pain in its performance.

The schoolroom was full of the subdued hum of children's voices; the mistress stood at her desk, deep mourning on her figure and in her face. It was only the twelfth day since her bereavement; but she was glad of the return of regular work, though the white features and frail hands hardly seemed equal to much as yet. Presently the German girl who was her servant opened the door, and Miss Armytage went to hear her message.

"Von gentleman's in parlour;" which suggested to Edith a careful father of fresh pupils. She gave her deputy, Jay, a few charges, and went to the visitor, who had thought her an interminable time in coming. He, blooming, strong, fresh from his healthy farm-life in the backwoods, saw with compassion how wan and worn she looked. Nursing at night during her father's illness, and school-keeping in the day, might be blamed for this. Would she come to Cedar Creek, and be restored?

"Yes," she answered, with perfect frankness, but not until the current six months of schooling had elapsed. At the end of June she would be free; and then, if Mrs. Wynn asked her and Jay—

The other, the old question, was on Robert's lips at the instant. And to this also she said "Yes.

* * * * *

Now for the prospects of the settlement which we have traced from its first shanty to its first street. Its magnates looked forward confidently to its development as a town—nay, perchance as a city of ten thousand inhabitants, when it purposes to assume a new name, as risen from nonage. Future maps may exhibit it as Wynnsboro', in honour of the founder. A station on the line of rail to connect the Ottawa with Lake Huron is to stand beside that concession line (now a level plank road) where Robert Wynn halted eleven years ago, axe in hand, and gazed in dismay on the impenetrable bush.

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